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Linguistics and Poetry: Phonological Performance Analysis as Key to Interpretation in Donne's Lyrics.

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LINGUISTICS AND POETRY:
PHONOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
AS KEY TO INTERPRETATION IN DONNE'S LYRICS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by
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B.A., Rhodes College, 1979
M.A., Mississippi College, 1991
December 1997

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In remembrance of Dr. C. William Durrett, whose
vocalizations of these poems and many others will live in
my memory forever

. . . you have to read Donne aloud, it's like a Bach fugue.

Helene Hanff
84 Charing Cross Road

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In every stage of my experience at LSU, from first beginning to commute to classes in 1991 to the final printing of the dissertation, fellow graduate student Beverly Moon has been an unbelievably versatile provider of all sorts of help. For the present project, Dr. Lisi Oliver arrived late on the scene yet quickly proved indispensable for her ideas as well as her expertise in linguistics.

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In the whole of my extended career as a student, two professors stand out as having given me purpose, inspiration, and unflagging support. One of those is Robert Llewellyn, who taught me philosophy in my undergraduate days in the seventies, and whose interest and support have continued through the years. The other is Anna Nardo, without whom my graduate education, my preparation to teach despite my hearing impairment, and the genesis of this project--not to mention its completion--would never have taken place.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

For the labeling of vowel and consonant sounds, the standard symbols of the International Phonetic Association are used. Following is a list of those IPA symbols employed in this document, described by the General American orthographic symbol for the sound and Key Words representing its occurrence in initial, final, and medial positions, respectively, for consonants and initial, medial, and final positions, respectively, for vowels (unless there is no such occurrence of the sound in English). Except where marked with an asterisk, all information is from *Descriptive Phonetics* (2nd edition) by Donald Calvert.

CONSONANTS

<u>IPA</u>	<u>GENERAL AMERICAN</u>	<u>KEY WORDS</u>
[p]	p	pie, tap, happy
[t]	t	tie, sit, later
[k]	k	key, back, become
[b]	b	be, cab, rabbit
[d]	d	day, mud, fading
[g]	g	go, log, begged
[h]	h-	he, ahead
[f]	f	fan, leaf, coffee
[s]	s	see, makes, upset
[v]	v	vine, have, ever
[z]	z	zoo, size, lazy
[tʃ]	ch	chair, such, teacher
[dʒ]	j	jam, edge, enjoy
[j]	y	yes, canyon
[l]	l	low, bowl, color
[r]	r	red, bar, oral

<u>IPA</u>	<u>GENERAL AMERICAN</u>	<u>KEY WORDS</u>
[m]	m	my, team, camera
[n]	n	new, tin, any
[ŋ]	ng	song, singer

VOWELS

[i]	ee	eat, seed, be
[ɪ]	-i-	if, bit
[ɛ]	-e-	end, bet
[æ]	-a-	at, bat
[u]	oo	ooze, boot, too
[ɔ]	aw	awful, caught, law
[ɑ]	-o-	odd, father, pa
[ɒ]	*	(RP) pot, gone, cross*
[ʌ]	-u-	up, cub
[ʊ]	ur	urn, burn, fur

DIPHTHONGS (Two-position vowels)**

[eɪ]	a-e (ai, ay)	able, made, may
[oʊ]	oa (-o, o-e)	own, boat, no
[aɪ]	i-e (igh, -y)	ice, mine, my
[ɔɪ]	oi (oy)	oil, coin, boy

*This vowel does not occur in standard American speech, but is frequent in Received Pronunciation (British). The Key Words are from *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course* by Peter Roach.

**For each of the first three diphthongs listed, the first position vowel does not occur independently in English, and so is not listed as a simple vowel. The Key Words should, however, allow the reader unfamiliar with phonetics to approximate the sounds of these vowels, which, as the first position vowels, constitute the greater portion of the sound of the diphthong.

ABSTRACT

This study effects a radical blending of linguistic science and literary criticism by using phonological theory and methodology to uncover interpretive clues in the form of structurally-based guidance to the manner of performance of certain lines of selected poems. Its underlying assumption is that with regard to interpretation, the oral dimension of metrical lyric poetry is at least as important as the written dimension, since such commonly accepted features as meter, rhyme, and alliteration depend on oral performance of the poetry involved, at least in the form of the reader's sounding it imaginarily to the mind's ear. It follows that intonationally precise renditions of interpretations under consideration need to be taken into account as part of the evidence used to determine their acceptability or unacceptability as interpretations. An interpretation that is more completely supported by a poem's phonological structure, by that structure's facilitating more precise performance of meaning (in the spirit of Pope's dictum *the sound must seem an echo to the sense*), is by this measure a more accurate interpretation than one whose performance is less completely supported. In addition to structural sound elements (such as meter or rhyme) offering automatic but usually subtle expression of the speaker's meaning or mood, many poetic lines contain phonetic, metrical, or syntactical arrangements conducive

to particular instances of optional performance variations, and therefore supporting the interpretations expressed by those variations. The conversational style and directly expressed emotion of Donne's love lyrics cause these poems, especially, to reward such interpretive performance analysis. The ongoing interpretive debates regarding the speaker's tone surrounding many of the lyrics can thus be adjudicated by considering the phonological elements enabling or hindering precise renditions of given interpretations. Examined in detail are *A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day*, *Elegy XIX: To his Mistress Going to Bed*, *The Canonization*, *Twickenham Garden*, *The Sunne Rising*, and *The Extasie*. A different use of performance analysis, that of considering phonological differences among various versions of a poem whose text is under dispute, is employed in a study of three distinct texts of *A Hymne to God the Father*.

CHAPTER ONE: GENESIS AND A NOCTURNALL

It was as a direct result of the late Professor Bill Durrett's reading aloud in his British Survey classroom, utilizing both his vibrant speaking voice and his talent for intonational expressiveness, that I first became fascinated with the sounds of English poetry. To me, the essence of poetic genius was the ability to choose words whose structures supported an emotionally precise performance of the poem, thereby equipping or even guiding the reader to effect the nuances of emotional expressiveness suggested by the sense of the poem. The careful voicing, by an adept reader like Dr. Durrett, of a poem so generated brought me an incredible feeling of rapture, of rightness, of sheer joy in creation. And during the course of those two semesters we encountered the works of many poets of genius: Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, Browning, Eliot, to name a few. But I was especially intrigued by Dr. Durrett's reading of the love poems of John Donne, I think because for Donne the emotions are so directly expressed, thereby challenging the reader to inject that much more feeling into the rendition. Coleridge, arguably the most gifted English critic of all time, wrote that Donne's work demands to be sounded "with the sense of Passion," "with all the force and meaning

which are involved in the words" (qtd. in Stein, *Eloquence* 27); when, years after listening to Dr. Durrett, I first came upon this quotation, I nodded in agreement, strains of *Twicknam Garden* and *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* wafting through my brain.

None of Donne's pieces contains more "force and meaning" than *A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, Being the shortest day*, the much-admired and frequently anthologized statement of unbearable grief at the death of the speaker's *Immortal Beloved*:¹

A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, Being the shortest day

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes.

The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;

The worlds whole sap is sunke:

5

The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet life is shrunke,
Dead and enterr'd, yet all these seeme to laugh,
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers bee
At the next world, that is, at the next Spring:

10

For I am every dead thing,
In whom love wrought new Alchimie.

For his art did expresse

A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and lean emptinesse
He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not.

15

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have,

I, by loves limbecke, am the grave

21

Of all, that's nothing. Oft a flood

Have wee two wept, and so

Drownd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two Chaosses, when we did show

25

Care to ought else; and often absences
Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)
 Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown;
 Were I a man, that I were one, 30
 I needs must know, I should preferre,
 If I were any beast,
 Some ends, some means; Yea plants, yea stones detest,
 And love, all, all, some properties invest,
 If I an ordinary nothing were, 35
 As shadow, a light, and body must be here.

But I am None; nor will my Sunne renew.
 You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser Sunne
 At this time to the Goat is runne
 To fetch new lust, and give it you, 40
 Enjoy your summer all,
 Since shee enjoyes her long nights festivall,
 Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call
 This hour her Vigill, and her eve, since this
 Both the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is. 45

R.S. Edgecombe pairs the poem with *King Lear* as an example of "extending sorrow beyond the limits of the conceivably sorrowful" (67), and proceeds to explore the rhetorical technique he calls "hyper-hyperbole"; he notes that Donne's piece "opens with images of exhausted, numbed ultimacy, concentrating a figurative midnight on a literal one, and so superimposing one absolute upon another" (70). When Dr. Durrett read *A nocturnall* aloud from his commanding position as the professor confidently enlightening the young minds of his undergraduates, his voice carried by turns bitterness, resignation, anger, and despair--all those varying emotions of nothingness Donne's speaker lays claim to--and the words seemed tailored to convey his expressiveness. In the opening stanza his deeply resonant vocal cords buzzed and hissed on the [z] and [s] sounds

which occurred every few syllables, and in one of only two lines not containing them, he chopped the syllables viciously as the speaker's anger came alive in the quick succession of all three voiceless stops ([p], [t], [k]) contained in the single adjective *hydroptique*. And so it was with about half the remaining lines in the poem, as well as lines in many of Donne's other works and favorite lines by other poets. My rapture knew no bounds as Dr. Durrett progressed through the masters of the British craft. It was Pope's dictum "the sound must seem an echo to the sense" (*An Essay on Criticism*, Part 2, line 365) brought to its fullest actualization by a sensitive human voice making use of every possible tone and sound effect present in the words and their ordering.

All of this was fine and fascinating, until in graduate school I became aware that for many of Donne's most significant pieces there were ongoing critical debates regarding fundamental interpretive questions centering on the issue of the speaker's attitude toward his words or his motive in uttering them. For a given poem, some critics would take the speaker seriously, while others would look at the multiple ambiguities in the words and conclude the poem was meant to be understood ironically, with the speaker's insincerity showing in various comic or ribald ways.² What troubled me was that in the proliferation of evidence on either side of this basic interpretive question, virtually no one considered anything remotely

connected to the essence of poetic art as I had perceived it when listening to the works being brought to life in oral performance. Sound analysis did exist, but critics rarely used it as a means toward interpretation. Where I had felt, even (I thought) *known* instinctively and intuitively, that the sounds in the words Donne chose were oftentimes eminently suited to conveying particular emotions that a careful reader could bring out in performance, here were critics disagreeing over which emotions the poem contained to begin with. To me, it seemed the interpretive method truest to the spirit of lyric poetry would be to discover, within the boundaries set by the literal meaning of the words, which type of emotion a poem's sounds were most equipped to convey. What I felt compelled to examine, then, was the structure and arrangement of the words and lines in these poems, in hopes of discovering some secrets of that essential connection of sounds and expressiveness, and at the same time uncovering interpretive evidence of a type seldom considered, a type which seemed to me to arise from the very heart of poetic creativity. Elizabeth Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt, pre-eminent current writers on linguistics and literature, term the object of my study *semantic-phonological cohesion* (77), and make clear that "[sound's] role is that of supporter, not creator, of meaning" (71)--but where meaning is in dispute, it seems to follow that the question can

fruitfully be asked which of the possible meanings the sound most completely supports.

Interestingly enough, the love poem of Donne's in which I had heard perhaps the most skill of all, the *Nocturnall*, seems to be one of the few pieces not subject to significant critical interpretive disagreement.³ There are differences in readings of individual lines, to be sure, and even differences in views of the poem's total import, but no one to my knowledge has attempted to doubt the sincerity of the bereaved speaker in his despair and desolation. Even assuming such uniform understanding of the poem's tone, however, it is still possible to analyze it for the first of the two objectives--to uncover the workings of the words' expressive power--and to set out those findings as an introduction to the method of interpretive sound analysis, which can subsequently be applied to other poems in order to discover evidence for adjudicating the interpretive debates surrounding them. To that end, I will begin by subjecting *A Nocturnall* to a careful reading wherein I examine the sounds with respect to the agreed-upon sense in an effort to see how the two are connected.

Stanza one of the *Nocturnall* represents the speaker's lowest point in the poem, since in the opening line of the following stanza he begins his very gradual ascent from the depths of unmitigated despair by directing the ordinary lovers to "study" him, thereby demonstrating a desire--or

at least ironically voicing a desire--to see some good come out of his pain. The sound structure of the stanza works in several ways to echo the sense of the speaker's utter desolation, and to provide possibilities for a performer to enhance his or her rendition thereof. Perhaps the most noticeable echoing device is the extensive alliteration of the hissing fricative⁴ consonants [s] and [z]. When A. J. Smith, for example, speaks of "the constant repetitions of the verbal and schematic pattern [that] set up a kind of tolling--'yeares . . . dayes . . . Lucies'; and [how] the effect is sustained over eight lines of lugubriously resonant pondering of the single irreducible point" (38), it is the [s] and [z] sounds (concentrated primarily by the use of plurals and possessives at every opportunity) he refers to. (Lines six and nine are the only lines in the stanza not containing any [s] or [z] consonants.) The way this seems to work is that the hissing and buzzing form a kind of deathly background hum to which the speaker returns every few syllables. In lines 1-5, where the effect is most concentrated, it is as though he continually falls back into either the buzz--which may suggest the buzz of nonexistence, or of the numbness of the speaker's consciousness after he has cut himself off from the world--or the lighter-sounding hiss, which comes, of course, from what Donne's friend Jonson calls the serpent's letter, and which furthermore can come across as a more menacing version of the enveloping buzz, made more menacing

by its lack of the full-bodied sound of the voiced consonant:

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes.
The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
The worlds whole sap is sunke.

When Dr. Durrett spoke that last phrase, he would prolong the alliterated hissing [s] sounds in a searing expression of hostility which culminated in a sharply clipped [k], so that *sunke* was effectively spit out in anger.

Then in line six, the only line in the stanza besides the final line (nine) that contains no [s] or [z] sounds, the humming is interrupted by the phonetically jarring *The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk*, which jars despite, or perhaps because of, its being the first perfectly iambic⁵ line in the stanza. The jarring seems to result from the introduction of four features heretofore largely missing from the phonetic configuration: the absence of the [s] and [z] segments; the alliteration of the liquid [l] in *generall* and *balme*; the use, in the focus words, of the similar low back vowels [ɔ] in *balme* and the slightly less low [ɒ] in the stressed middle syllable of *hydroptique*;⁶ and, perhaps most significantly, the unusual combination of all three voiceless stops ([p], [t], and [k]) in the space of two syllables in the most important word in the line, *hydroptique*. Having the sentence accent fall as it does on that word makes for an especially vivid

sound-of-sense effect: the inherent harshness of the stop consonants⁷ means that when they are part of an adjective meaning "rabidly thirsty," which is emphasized as the main point of the sentence, the word can carry as much bitterness as the performer wishes to inject into it.

(When Dr. Durrett read, he chose to inject quite a bit.)

The [s] and [z] alliteration returns, albeit at a lesser intensity, in lines 7 and 8, which feature, respectively, the third consecutive line-ending *-unk* rhyme and the syntactically, metrically, and phonetically foregrounded *Dead and enterr'd*. The power of this phrase seems to stem from its brevity (since it is circumscribed by a line boundary and a syntactical boundary), its metrically irregular trochaic opening, and its alliterated [d] sounds (4 in as many syllables), which enclose the four compact syllables consisting of front stops [d] and [t] and front and mid vowels [ɛ] in *dead* and *en-*, [æ] in *and*, and [ɜ] in *-terr'd*, so that the phrase offers a vivid phonetic contrast to *shrunke* with its mid vowel [ʌ], back nasal consonant [ŋ], and back stop [k]. Then there is a slight but noticeable shift beginning with the latter half of line 8 and continuing through line 9. In one of a spattering of critical interpretive remarks based on sound, N.J.C. Andreasen characterizes yet all these seeme to laugh / *Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph* as "captur[ing] in their rhythm the slow death march of [the speaker's] misery" (156). It seems there is a twofold explanation for

what she is getting at: the uninterrupted iambic progression sustained over the entire line and a half, and the alternating cyclical return, in the stressed syllables, of the high front vowel [i] in *these seeme* and *mee* and the low back vowel [ɔ] in the rhyming *laugh* and *epitaph*. Moreover, line nine closes the stanza with what Theodore Redpath terms a "laconic snap" (38). Though Redpath, like Andreasen, declines to elaborate, saying only that the effect is "astringent" (38), what he seems to be touching on is the concentration of meaning and sound in the sentence-accented and stanza-final *Epitaph*; the thought of the sentence is carried entirely by that word, which, appropriately enough, has two accented syllables, the second of which closes the phonetically rich stanza not with a prolonged hiss but with a short (because unconnected, being utterance-final) [f], thereby closing the stanza with a sharp cutting-off sensation. The sense conveyed is one of closed-minded, hopeless negativity.

Before moving on to the rest of *A nocturnall*, it will be well to pause and examine what we have discovered so far. The first sound effect we noted, the [s] and [z] alliteration in the first stanza, is an example of what I shall call an *expressive structural element*; it can be defined as an aspect of the poem's diction or syntax that contributes to the expressive effect of any oral or imagined oral reading of the poem. The performance of such structural components is inescapable; they are

automatically present in any rendition of the poem, and therefore constitute perhaps the strongest type of phonological interpretive evidence. These structural elements have long been recognized in poetic criticism, just not systematically applied to interpretation as is done in the present study. They include such devices as metrical techniques, syntactic variation, and, as is exemplified by the [s] and [z] alliteration, expressive sound effects carried by particular phonetic segments. Regarding structural devices of the metrical type, Derek Attridge explains that in the process of composing, the poet chooses a verse form that embodies in the rhythmic structure "the fundamental modes of energy expenditure that characterise emotional and attitudinal conditions" (296). In poems constructed in this manner, a particular flavor of rhythmic reading can be "not only invite[d] because of the evident emotional state of the imagined speaker, but enforce[d] by the rhythmic (and syntactic) structures of the language itself" (297). We might extend this notion to the rest of the expressive structural elements by saying that a skilled poet chooses the entire set of linguistic forms (segments,⁸ meter, syntax) so that the sounds they produce embody emotional conditions appropriate for their meaning, thereby ensuring that those emotion-laden sounds will be heard each time the poem is read aloud.⁹

The second basic type of poetic sound effect is exemplified by the potential for the performer to prolong

the hissing [s]'s in the phrase *sap is sunke*--a phenomenon closely related to, but separate from, the actual fact of the [s] and [z] concentration. The occurrence of this type of effect in a given rendition is not automatic but instead depends upon the performer's choice; it can thus be termed an *optional performance feature* and defined as an aspect of a vocal rendition of the poem that a performer may choose to include in order to give fuller expression to the speaker's emotional state. Examples include exaggeration, as just mentioned, of existing segmental features, alternative accentual patterns, and precise intonational expression of particularities of meaning. The performative feature of exaggerating the [s] hissing arises out of, but is separate from, the structural feature which is the very presence of the alliterated [s] sounds; optional features always arise from aspects of the diction or syntax, but these aspects themselves do not necessarily have to function as expressive structural elements, as in this case the [s] sounds happen to do. The identification and analysis of optional performance features are an original contribution of this study, and constitute a type of interpretive sound evidence somewhat weaker than structural elements--since their actualization is not automatic and therefore not necessarily a part of every rendition of a poem--but nonetheless valid as interpretive evidence for any poem written for oral performance. The objection will likely be made that since these features are optional, they

cannot serve as interpretive evidence--but my claim is that their very presence in the poem as potentialities is evidence of a certain strength, since an interpretation in line with such effects can be performed more completely and precisely than one for which these possibilities are not present.

Moreover, as we shall see eventually but for which we do not yet have an example in the present poem, sometimes an aspect of a line that serves as the basis for an optional performance feature--as the presence of the [s] sounds serves as the basis for their prolongation--will not only provide the means for the actualization of that optional feature but will also in one way or another influence a performer toward choosing to actualize it. The optional performance feature can then be said to possess, or the line to contain, a performance directive, which will constitute interpretive evidence stronger than simple optional features but probably still less strong than expressive structural elements, since its actualization is still optional yet it does, unlike simple optional performative features, operate to coax the performer to include the feature. Whereas structural elements, as Attridge has explained, enforce their own performance, and simple optional features do not, those features possessing performance directives guide the performer but stop short of dictating that the feature be included. Performance directives seem to occur relatively infrequently, and A

nocturnall's only example occurs in the final stanza. The three terms (of which the first two form the basic categories)--structural elements, optional performative features, and performance directives--will cover virtually all instances of phonetic interpretive evidence to be covered in this study.

Now that the terms have been laid out, let us return to our analysis of *A nocturnall*. The second stanza, in which the speaker presents his proposal that the ordinary lovers learn from his example, is only slightly less desolate phonetically than the first. At least three features contribute to this effect. First, the structural device of the emphatically shortened line functions with special brilliance in *For I am every dead thing* (12). In each of the poem's five nine-line stanzas, lines one, two, six, seven, eight, and nine are pentameter, punctuated by tetrameter in lines three and four and trimeter in five. Of the five third-position lines, four have the full eight syllables of complete tetrameter; as the only third-position line to consist of seven syllables, line twelve is more noticeably shortened than the others, and in this sense stands out even more than any of the even shorter five trimeter lines in the fifth position, since each of those conforms exactly to the pattern established for them. As A.J. Smith notes, "the short lines . . . have a most telling finality" (38), and here the finality is augmented by the metrical difference just explained as well

as by the missing unstressed syllable¹⁰ between *dead* and *thing*; the sentence stress falls on the entire phrase that comprises the last three words, and the monosyllabic final foot disrupts the iambic regularity of the line, slowing the tempo on *dead* and *thing* and making for weighty pauses on both major parts of the thematically central noun phrase. To appreciate the effect fully, imagine that Donne had instead written *For I am every fallen thing*. Although the same words would still be accented, the meter would be normal for the line's stanzaic position, rendering the emphasis considerably less powerful.

The second feature contributing to the stanza's continuation of the structural echo of desolation is a continuation of stanza one's [s] and [z] alliteration, which, though the [s] and [z] sounds still alternate, has now metamorphosed into an emphasis on hissing, augmented by the repeated *-esse* rhyme:

For his art did expresse
A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and lean emptinesse
He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not.

The shift from buzzing and hissing to a predominance of hissing may or may not be significant; in any event, the speaker's sense of desolation is still present, if perhaps at a level slightly less hopeless than that of stanza one. In the present passage we see also the stanza's third structural sound-of-sense device, which seems another

instance of Redpath's terminating laconic snap. Not is so poetically memorable as to have been treated by many other critics, notably John Hollander in his insightful *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form*. Hollander explains how the accent on *not*, by virtue of the word's being used as an adjective rather than merely a negative particle, regularizes the meter and makes for a poetic statement that renders "Love's alchemy far more impressive" (53) than it might seem otherwise. It goes without saying that this emphasis also expresses the speaker's deep sense of his nothingness.

The terse, exaggerated end-stopping of *not* sets the stage, phonetically speaking, for a change of direction--though not of underlying sentiment--in the opening two lines of the next (third) stanza. These lines, which focus not on the speaker but on everyone and everything else and are therefore relatively positive in emotion, have a vibrant sound structure to match their brief excursion into the realm of the productively living. Edgecombe remarks that the "strumming on the absolute 'all' is typical of Donne" (71), and here "all" refers precisely to "all others," making the strumming underscore the speaker's constant and total loneliness. The collection of "living" substantives is introduced, appropriately, by a relative clause that opens with a contraction (*that's*), the casualness of which seems to capture the speaker's envious recognition of the lightness of these beings when viewed

alongside his misery. Then the string itself offers, by the structural dissimilarity of four nouns (*life, soule, forme, and spirit*) built on four different vowels ([aI], [oU], [], and [I], respectively), a phonetic liveliness that echoes their distinctness from the "dying" -esse nouns of the preceding stanza. And finally, in the latter part of the stanza the buzzing and hissing returns as the most audible structural feature of some new negative nouns: *Chaosses* (25), *absences* (26), and *carcasses* (27), all of which, by virtue of being the plurals of words whose singular forms end in [s], contain both [s] and [z] sounds, making for an even greater concentration of the sound than is present in the preceding stanzas. The stanza is therefore quite interestingly divided phonetically as well as lexically into positive and negative--living and dead--portions.

The fourth stanza, although it contains extravagant expressions of deepest emotion, is, with regard to form, the most strictly logical part of the poem. In it, the speaker shifts from pure description of his feelings to the mental gymnastics of the *first nothing conceit*--which extends the alchemical metaphors of the second stanza to and even past their logical extremity--and of the syllogistic reasoning that occupies the rest of the stanza. This mental activity on the parts of both the speaker and his listeners or readers takes the edge off the immediate emotional impact of the content, and accordingly, the sound

structure is more neutral than what has been analyzed thus far. Conspicuously gone is the preponderance of [s] and [z] sounds, but critics have identified a few weaker echoing devices, most having to do with the poem's metrical arrangement and thus operating as expressive structural elements.

Wilbur Sanders, in his comprehensive reading of the poem as the record of a recovery, notes the emphatic function of prominent unmetricality (in this case, a syllable's occurring in a metrically weak position yet containing the main accent of its clause) when he claims that "In that plangent stress on the word 'wrongs' lies the dignity of the life that is recovering itself" (118). Then, regarding the middle portion of the stanza, A. J. Smith makes an interesting comment:

Formal pattern and rhetorical scheme here have very much the effect of pointing. 'Were I a man, that I were one,/I needs must know; I should preferre,/If I were any beast,/Some ends, some means'--the sudden extra-emphatic rising line is slipped in to say with far greater and pithier vehemence that he is not even a beast. (38)

The extra emphasis Smith finds in the line seems to stem from the strong contrast between the weak and strong metrical positions; while the surrounding lines are likewise iambic, the line he focuses on (32) casts null-stressed and almost null-stressed syllables in every weak position and strongly stressed syllables in every strong position (any receiving emphatic stress by its

meaning in the sentence). The conspicuous sense of rising thus created is augmented by the line's brevity to make for a structural element of metrical foregrounding that spotlights the phrase the poet wants to emphasize.

In the remainder of the stanza, probably the most noticeable sound enhancement is the repetition of *yea* in line 33 and especially of *all* in line 34, enabling the performer to intone the speaker's plaintiveness effectively. And in line 35, the radical unfamiliarity of the unusual phrase *ordinary nothing* causes it to be pronounced carefully and emphatically beyond what would be required by its carrying the only accent of its clause, thus causing the performer to give maximum emphasis to these words describing his desolation. Stanza four thus uses structural devices of several types--phonetic, metrical, and syntactic--to enhance the sense of the speaker's despair, albeit in a manner less immediately noticeable than that of the preceding stanzas.

The final stanza is, like the fourth, highly logical, but it also contains some of the most emotional statements in the poem as the speaker makes his final resolution to forsake life on earth and look toward joining his beloved in death. The opening clause, *But I am None*, is structurally highlighted by its stanza-initial position and its stark monosyllables, so that it makes a memorable declaration--not unlike that of *Epitaph* or not--of the speaker's feeling of isolation. Four lines later, another

extra-emphatic rising three-foot line (as we saw Smith note regarding line 32) serves to underscore the speaker's subtly sarcastic admonition to the commonplace lovers to "Enjoy your summer all" (line 41). Moreover, the phonetic structure of *enjoy* is especially suited to carrying an intonational pattern that captures precisely the speaker's muted resentment; the stressed syllable *-joy*, phonetically a strong syllable by virtue of its diphthong, and following as it does the weak, unstressed *en-*, provides the performer with sufficient force and duration to inject a slight but definite intonational gesture of envious sarcasm.¹¹ (Later on, when I treat a poem containing more prominent cases of this particular variety of optional performance feature--*The Canonization*, in Chapter Four--I will label it an *ironic punch* and describe it more completely.)

Furthermore, since *enjoy* receives the sentence accent, the focus automatically falls on the word, so that adding the accentual gesture is a quite natural step; *enjoy* can thus be said to contain a moderately strong performance directive toward such an expression of resentment. The final four lines of the poem close the speaker's case with quiet resignation. Phonetic calmness matching this resignation is achieved here by--among other elements--an extra syllable in line 43 (unless *towards* is pronounced monosyllabically) and the repetition, in a slightly different arrangement, of the poem's opening words in the closing couplet, which, given their sense of deepest night,

means they will likely be sounded with a slight lowering of pitch to indicate the speaker's reiteration of precisely the same feeling of desolation with which he opened the poem.

Having completed the survey of the ways sound echoes sense in *A nocturnall*, I shall now consider what this survey has demonstrated about the interpretive method that will be used in attempting to adjudicate the critical disagreements regarding some of Donne's other poems. Perhaps the most effective way to do this will be to recapitulate a few of the points that have been made and see how they would function as evidence if there were an interpretive debate surrounding this poem.

The drawback to such a plan is that the content of this poem does not, as mentioned at the outset, reasonably allow it to be interpreted as insincere. There could conceivably be some disagreement concerning the amount of ironic distance between the speaker of *A nocturnall* and the content of his utterance, or, to put it another way, the amount of gentle self-mockery he exhibits, but no matter how great that distance between the self (the speaking consciousness) and the pain he expresses, the pain remains real pain. The sound enhancements detailed above, which either create (in the case of expressive structural elements) or help the performer create (in the case of optional performance features) a complete sense of the speaker's despair, will operate just as efficaciously for a

self-mocking performance of genuine pain as for a straightforward one. Arguably, insofar as hyperbole is understood as hysterical self-mockery, the sound effects expressing pain and bitterness can support a self-mocking reading to an even greater extent than they can a thoroughly sincere one. (In this sense, my reading could serve as an argument in favor of that type of "ironic" interpretation.) The point is that since the speaker's expressions of pain cannot be understood as false or insincere, the kind of interpretive argument I will be handling with other poems cannot realistically be set up for this one. It does seem possible, however, to assume, in a purely hypothetical fashion, that a reading of the poem as insincere--or, more precisely, of certain portions of the poem as insincere--is plausible even when we don't really think it is, and then to imagine a performance expressive of such a reading, to see how its phonological effects would compare to those of the sincere performance whose sound enhancements have just been examined.

A quick survey of this task reveals that some of the sound effects deemed significant for a straightforward interpretation can just as readily function to enhance ironic exaggerations; the much-discussed [s] and [z] alliteration of the first three stanzas is the main instance of this double-edgedness.¹² Some of the other effects, however, simply do not work if we attempt to understand the poem ironically; they lose their

expressiveness and therefore their very existence as sound echoes of sense. Still other effects not only do not echo the ironic sense but actually work against its expression. Stanza one contains examples of each of these situations. The syntactically, metrically, and phonetically highlighted *Dead and enterr'd* of line 8 is an example of the most extreme type: since the phrase cannot by any reasonable stretch of the imagination be understood as anything but deeply serious, the structural emphasis on and within it works directly against an ironic performance of the poem. We can entertain the thought that the mere presence of the idea of death is not antithetical to an ironic reading, but its being phonetically spotlighted is strong evidence that the speaker is in serious pain, whether self-mocking or not. The final effect we found in stanza one, Redpath's "laconic snap" in *Epitaph*, is an instance of the middle type of comparative sound device. While neither acting in a double-edged fashion to express either type of interpretation nor actively undermining one of them, it creates an expressive effect for a sincere interpretation (as examined above) which is lost when the poem is read ironically: the dismissiveness expressed by the emphatic cutoff has nothing to contribute to an insincere reading.

The sound effects found in stanzas two, three, and five are for the most part double-edged; a performer with an ironic bent could use them to enhance an insincere reading just about as well as they enhance a serious one.

When we come to the fourth stanza, however, we find more evidence that an ironic reading would waste the sound potential of the poem. The metrical (and, though it was not discussed, the phonetic) emphasis on *wrongs*, like that on *Dead and enterr'd*, highlights an idea (the extremely personal sense of the speaker's loss) that can hardly be understood as possessing any degree of irony; it is thus another case of an expressive structural effect that highlights something whose highlighting works against an ironic reading of the poem. The next two structural sound effects, the strongly rising line 32 and the repetition of *yea and all*, are not especially contradictory to an ironic reading, but their expressiveness does go to waste, just as did that of *Epitaph* in the first stanza. The careful pronunciation of *ordinary nothing* is the only part of the fourth stanza that seems double-edged in its potential; the other elements would make for a considerable phonological argument in favor of a straightforward reading of the poem.

In this imaginary interpretive exercise, then, and especially in the sound analysis preceding it, I have set out the basics of the method to be used in this study. Disputes over meaning--often (but not always) centering on the question of the speaker's attitude toward what he is saying--will be adjudicated by appealing to two categories of poetic sound effects: expressive structural elements and optional performance features, particularly those whose inclusion is mandated by what I have termed performance

directives. The first poem to be analyzed in this manner (*Elegy XIX*, in Chapter Four) will be one for which the interpretive debate is relatively simple to adjudicate; we will then proceed to increasingly more problematic cases. The intervening two chapters will seek to ground the study theoretically and historically, in order to establish a firm foundation for the analyses that will follow.

End Notes

¹I borrow this phrase from the film of the same name, about the life and love of Beethoven, because it seems the best way to describe succinctly the type of love Donne's speaker has lost.

²There are, of course, infinite applications of the word "irony," and the term is frequently used in interpretations of Donne's love poems to refer to an ironic equation of human love with religious devotion (as in Andreasen's reading of *A nocturnall* and in many readings of *The Canonization*) rather than ironic insincerity in the proclamations of human love. The former type of irony can be a speaker's way of expressing extreme human love, and so does not necessarily generate an insincere tone. It is, therefore, the latter type of irony--encompassing insincerity, comicalness, or sexual suggestiveness--with which I am concerned when I examine poems for phonetic evidence of the speaker's tone. The term "irony," when used herein, will, generally speaking, refer to the speaker's insincerity in his proclamations of deep devotion; individual applications of the term for particular poems will be laid out at the beginning of each chapter.

³Deborah Larson lays out the basic question to be addressed in the present study when she explains, "the range of critical squabbles often extends . . . into the unknowable but enticing realm of Donne's personality. Is the 'Valediction: of weeping' a cynical foreknowledge of unfaithfulness . . . or a moving illustration of mutual faithfulness . . . ? Are the *Anniversaries* the result of sycophantic pragmatism or of a profound philosophical questioning? Is the 'Nocturnall' Donne's mocking of idolatrous love (Andreasen 1967, 152-160), or is it a portrayal of his own loss of self after the death of Anne or the Countess of Bedford" (15). For her final example,

however, Larson seems to have misread Andreassen's intentions. The latter sees the *Nocturnall* as a bitter parody of the religious *via negativa* and the Roman Catholic nocturns, or night prayers, ironic in its being formulated in terms evoking those religious means of hope but actually promising no hope whatsoever. She explicitly describes the speaker's condition as "one of total hopelessness, total despair, total depression" (160). Surely this reading falls into the category of a portrayal of the loss of self rather than that of a mockery of idolatrous love.

⁴The classification system of vowels and consonants is covered in Chapter 2; such terms as "fricatives," "stops," and "low back vowels" are fully explained.

⁵The line is perfectly iambic if the final two syllables of *generall* are spoken as a single syllable; otherwise, it is almost, but not quite, perfectly iambic.

⁶It is possible that the two vowels were identical, not merely similar; Dobson says of *balm* (Vol. I, 408) that possibly the most common pronunciation was with [ɒ], though it later evolved to [a] or [ɑ].

⁷Empirical evidence for the perceived harshness of the stop consonants is provided by--among others--Reuven Tsur, and will be discussed elsewhere in the dissertation.

⁸A segment is simply the smallest divisible unit of speech sound; for purposes of this study, it can be equated with the phoneme, the smallest unit of sound that can distinguish two words.

⁹Expressive structural elements are sometimes termed *phonesthesia* or *phonetic symbolism*, which defined in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* as "vocal sound that suggests meaning" (769).

¹⁰Attridge terms this phenomenon an "implied offbeat," using this very line as one of his illustrations (173).

¹¹The distinction between strong and weak syllables is a phonetic one and is not to be confused with the distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables, which is, of course, a lexical and syntactic concept. In *The Sound Pattern of English*, Chomsky and Halle define a strong syllable as consisting of either any vowel followed by a consonant cluster or a complex vowel (that is, a long vowel or diphthong) followed by any number (including zero) of consonants (29). While there is no necessary connection between strong and stressed or weak and unstressed syllables, it seems sensible that strong syllables are more equipped to carry stress, and that supposition is made in this study.

¹²The concept of *double-edgedness*, as explained in Reuven Tsur's article, will be discussed in depth elsewhere in the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Stated in simple terms, the thesis of this study is that there exists in lyric poetry a phonological element crucial to its interpretation. As I outlined in the opening chapter, that element consists of both structural components and performance possibilities. I hypothesized that for many poems these features support certain interpretive oral performances rather than certain other interpretive performances, and argued that this fact constitutes evidence in favor of the interpretations whose performances are thus supported. Such a sweeping claim requires theoretical justification in several forms; this justification is the subject of the present chapter.

Perhaps my most basic theoretical claim is that the oral dimension of lyric poetry is as important for interpretation as the currently privileged tradition of the written text. Donne's lyrics were composed at a time when the cultural transition from oral to written as the primary mode of literary presentation was largely complete, in that poems were written down rather than memorized. There seems to have remained, however, at least relative to modern times when almost all experiences of poetry and poetic criticism arise from silent reading, a rather widespread practice of oral poetry recitation,¹ both as parlor entertainment and, in the case of poems whose written transmission was accomplished not by publication but by

manuscript hand-copying, as an important vehicle of dissemination to society as a whole. Since Donne did not allow publication of his love lyrics during his lifetime, they seemingly fall into this category of orally disseminated works.

Moreover, as will be discussed further in the following chapter, the lyrics are for the most part intensely personal descriptions of the speaker's experiences in love, cast in the language of natural speech--adding further substance to the importance of their oral dimension. This conversational style, which encompasses not only word choice but also speech rhythms that often violate established metrical norms, seems to heighten the probability that they were designed with oral rendition in mind, which in turn seems to validate the importance of their treatment as combined oral-written entities and of performance considerations as evidence for their interpretation. With regard to the more traditional, nonconversational poetry of the time, John Hollander notes that composing the type of highly regular iambic verse that most English poets of the period were composing "is like writing new words to an old tune" (68). What he means is that the rhythm will be predictably the same; the familiar sound would thus be garnered with relative ease from written lines. With Donne's conversational style, which Frank Warnke aptly describes as "a strange and original

music, derived largely from an imitation of the accents of emotionally heightened conversation" (qtd. in Hollander 45), the opposite situation obtains: the unusual sound necessitates reading aloud as the means of ascertaining each poem's particular musical effect. It seems fair to assume the central relevance of oral performance in understanding the work of this poet of conversational music.

The conversational diction and syntax, and the related situating of major portions of virtually all of the lyrics as actual spoken monologues either addressed to or spoken in the presence of human characters, seem to justify not only the focus on the oral dimension but also the specific type of interpretive analysis I am performing. As Jonathan Culler explains in an article detailing "Changes in the Study of the Lyric," although the presently predominant deconstructionist school of criticism tends largely to ignore lyric poetry, the genre is not excepted from Jacques Derrida's dismissal of human presence in any text, written or oral, which is based on his belief that all language is inevitably distanced and contradictory. Using mostly fantastical examples from Shelley (such as *O wild West Wind* or *Hail to thee, blithe Spirit*), Culler treats the device of the apostrophe extensively, demonstrating the inadequacy of New Criticism's theory of the lyric as a fictionalization of an actual historical utterance. He

shows instead the greater richness and logical soundness to be had by assuming a deconstructionist perspective, which, since it does not involve the preoccupation with determining the speaker's intentions that results from viewing the lyric as fictionalized utterance, leaves the critic free to concentrate on aspects too long ignored under the traditional theory, such as self-referentiality, intertextuality, the free play of signifiers, and sound patterning other than that which pertains to the speaker's attitude. With regard to Shelley's apostrophic poetry, and possibly even a major portion of all lyric poetry--such as Yeats' *Among School Children*, for which Culler contrasts Cleanth Brooks' simplistic New Critical reading to Paul DeMan's sophisticated and obviously superior deconstructive reading--I believe the deconstructionist approach unquestionably more valuable than any approach that sweepingly defines the genre as "the utterance that is overheard" (Northrop Frye, qtd. in Culler, "Changes" 38) and proceeds to treat these poems as though they were overheard personal utterances when clearly they are not. For most of Donne's lyrics, however--including all of those subjected to interpretation in the present study--it seems just as clear to me that they are, largely, fictionalized utterances, and therefore it is useful to treat them as such, and permissible to seek to interpret them in the traditional sense of the word.

Culler describes the nonconversational nature of apostrophic poetry pragmatically, saying "it is difficult to find a tone in which to read them, and one declaims them with mildly embarrassed, self-conscious grandiloquence" (39), and we (or at least I) nod in wholehearted agreement. But the description does not seem to apply to Donne's highly interpersonal, conversational lyrics; it is not difficult at all to vocalize them, and in fact, as I have argued above, their rhythms can hardly be ascertained or appreciated without doing so. This is not to say Donne's love lyrics are beyond the scope of or somehow immune to the ontological displacements of Derridian metalinguistics, or even to say they are not deconstructible, which certainly they are; it is merely to say that, even assuming the truth of such fundamental claims, on another level there is still something valuable to be accomplished in poetic interpretation by considering these lyrics as the fictionalized human utterances they implicitly claim to be.

Granting equal importance, for interpretive purposes, to the oral dimension makes no claim regarding their metalinguistic positioning or their ontological status; it simply acknowledges that these pieces are presented as real human utterances and seeks to recreate them as such by imagining performances imitative of real human voices in the situations set by the poems. To argue otherwise would seem tantamount to asserting that it makes no difference

how a speaking part in a play is declaimed, since, ultimately, no utterance really harbors the direct presence of human consciousness. Lyric poetry that is less conversational than that considered in this study, whether by its fantastical apostrophes, by its exalted style (such as Keats *Grecian Urn*, another favorite example of Culler's, which seems to me to fall into a different category from Shelley's apostrophes), or by some other means, does not seem as conducive to interpretive phonological analysis. I believe that a body of lyrics such as this one, however, which distinctly presents situations that do purport to represent (in whatever sense is possible under a given metaphysical system) real human presence, rewards such analysis, as I hope to show in the chapters that follow.

These typological distinctions, as well as the suppositions made earlier regarding the relative orality of Donne's work, aside, one might still object that phonological considerations are irrelevant as interpretive evidence: even if the lyrics under scrutiny were more frequently heard than read, the poems are nonetheless written entities, and therefore exist as essentially written, rather than oral, works of art. I take issue with this view. Disregarding sound analysis itself--which, as touched on previously, consists mainly of scattered observations in support of positions arrived at by other means--many facets of mainstream poetic criticism seem to

depend on the phonological dimension in ways which are perhaps so fundamental that they often go unnoticed. When prosodists or other types of critics speak of meter, or assonance and alliteration, or vaguer concepts such as the movement of a line of poetry, they are referring to aspects of the lines as sounded, rather than absorbed directly from the printed page.

The confusion on this point may arise from the intriguing phenomenon of silent reading, which seemingly can involve either speaking the written words to the mind's ear or, what is probably more common in modern times, truly silent reading that involves no speaking at all but rather is a kind of instantaneous processing of written information carried out by some impressive neural shortcut from the eye to the mind. Any written text--whether lyric poetry from the turn of the sixteenth century or stock quotations from the CNN ticker--can be read either aloud, or to the mind's ear, or truly silently, but insofar as meter, movement, and the like are concerned, only the first two types of reading represent a poem in such a way that these characteristics can be examined. Since these features are commonly accepted as valid ways to talk about metrical lyric poetry, it seems fair to say that for interpretive ventures that do not intend to exclude such approaches, the subject of criticism of such poetry must include the poem in its spoken form, either in the form of

"ghost reading" to the mind's ear or actual reading aloud. What seems to pass frequently unnoticed is the difference between ghost reading and truly silent reading; the two are unconsciously grouped together as silent, whereas actually ghost reading is, with regard to the quality of its existence in the imagination, more akin to reading aloud than it is to the silent reading that lacks the intervention of imaginary speaking. Comments such as "but I can sound the meter silently," which was taken from a professor's marginalia for another portion of this study but which could have been written by any of us from our twentieth-century print-oriented perspective, evince both the existence of ghost reading and the unexamined modern assumption that silent reading is simply any reading that does not make noise. Close analysis of just what is meant by "sounding" something "silently" reveals the distinction between the two types of silent reading and, more importantly, the inescapable fact that speech, whether silent or vocalized, must be involved in order for aspects of a poem such as meter to be examinable at all.

It follows from this inclusion of the oral dimension in general criticism of metrical lyric poetry that performance characteristics entailed by a particular interpretation deserve consideration when the interpretation's validity is judged. Such consideration is the purpose of the present study. Interpretations of each

of the lyrics to be considered have hinged largely on the matter of the speaker's tone--that is, his attitude toward what he is saying--so that competing readings tend to entail contrasting interpretive performances, in which the speaker's feelings are expressed by variations in such features as accent, intonation, rhythm, tempo, and vocal gestures, such as the prolonged holding back of an initial consonant to convey aggression or anger. The thesis of the study is that in addition to structural sound elements (such as meter or rhyme) offering automatic but usually subtle expression of the speaker's mood, many poetic lines contain phonetic, metrical, or syntactical clues supporting certain instances of these optional performance variations, and therefore supporting the interpretations expressed by those instances.

Another aspect of the project that needs introduction is the methodology to be employed in isolating and examining the sound elements and performance variations. As indicated by the title of the study, the science of linguistics will provide the basis of such methodology, with most material coming from the branches of phonetics, metrics, and intonation theory. This appeal to linguistics will serve two purposes: first, it will provide a way to talk objectively and concisely about the sound structure of language, the want of which conciseness has hampered sound-oriented critics of poetry over the years, and

second, it will provide an established body of knowledge about language, to lend validity to the conclusions reached. The purpose of this study is not, however, to reduce poetic art to a scientific enterprise; it is rather to use linguistics as a tool and resource in an attempt to uncover some of the secrets of how poetry works. As I explained in the opening chapter, the impetus behind the project is the deep reverence I have felt (and still do feel) for good poetry well performed. That fact will, I hope, serve as evidence that the scientific aspect, while necessarily forming a large portion of the commentary, is never intended to usurp the primary position of the works of literature being examined. As Elizabeth Traugott explains, linguistics "can help us talk about [literature], by providing us with a vocabulary and a methodology through which we can show how our experience of a work is in part derived from its verbal structure" (20).

I have tried to ensure that readers unfamiliar with linguistics will have no difficulty following the arguments constructed herein. Concepts are explained as they are introduced, either in the text or in the notes, and effort is made to keep complexity to a minimum. A few terms from the systems of vowel and consonant classification might be mentioned here at the outset, however, since these building blocks of sounds and words will be employed extensively.

Vowels are described by quality and duration, and a few words about each aspect should prove helpful. Vowel quality is determined by the position of the vocal apparatus, of which three dimensions are recognized: tongue elevation, location of that elevation relative to the front or back of the mouth, and lip formation (either rounded or unrounded). Thus the vowel in *three*, which is represented by the phonetic symbol [i], is high, front, and unrounded. Vowel duration is determined by the vowel's phonetic environment, particularly by what type of consonant follows it; it is simplified into binary terms ("long" and "short"), so that the vowel in *bad* is long while the same vowel is short in *bat*. It is worth mentioning that the traditional American grammar school lesson of "long" and "short" vowels is another system entirely--one apparently based on tenseness rather than length--and can be disregarded when considering linguistic terminology.

Consonants are classified according to place and manner of articulation and the quality of voicing or voicelessness, which refers to the vibration or nonvibration of the vocal cords. The least familiar of these aspects, and the one most pertinent to the present project, is the manner of articulation, of which there are six types. Stops, such as the [t] of *tea*, involve complete blockage of the air flow through the vocal tract, while for

fricatives the flow is impeded but not completely blocked, as in the [s] of *hiss*. Affricates begin like stops but end like fricatives, as in the [tʃ] beginning and ending *church* or the [dʒ] beginning and ending *judge*. This pair also illustrates the voicing quality, since [dʒ] is the voiced form of the same consonant as the voiceless [tʃ]; similarly, [d] (*dab*) is the voiced form of the voiceless [t] (*tab*), while [z] (*his*) is the voiced form of the voiceless [s] (*hiss*). For nasal consonants (all of which are voiced) the air flows through the nasal instead of the oral cavity, as in the [m] of *major* or the [ŋ] of *song*. Liquids (the [l] of *love* and the [r] of *road*) and glides (the [w] of *we* and the [j] of *yes*) are actually semi-vowels (and, again, all voiced) but are generally treated as consonants. Because the expressive qualities of consonants are usually a function of their manner of articulation, knowledge of these categories should equip the uninitiated reader to begin navigating the arguments in this study; various other concepts and phonological principles will be explained as needed.

A final, very important aspect of the study that needs theoretical justification is the intuitive or impressionistic nature of many of the claims and suppositions regarding the translation of differences in meaning (specifically, in most cases, in the speaker's attitude) into performance variations expressive of those

differences. Using, for the moment, the term "intonation" loosely to indicate the set of all nonverbal but spoken carriers of meaning, there are two categories of intonational systems used in the course of the study: what linguists refer to as contrastive systems, and what some linguists recognize as partially contrastive systems, though others refuse to grant these the status of "systems" at all. Highly contrastive systems include such features as variations in lexical stress that indicate whether a word is being used as a noun or verb (e.g., the noun *iNItiate* and the verb *iNItiATE*) or basic methods of sentence stressing that indicate the type of sentence being uttered (e.g., they will spoken with a level or falling pitch to signal a statement, and they will spoken with a rising pitch to signal a question) (Calvert 175). In such systems, specified variables stand for particular variations in meaning in one-to-one correspondences known by all speakers of the language. While this study will rely on many inferences based on these highly contrastive, closed systems of intonational conveyance of meaning, far more central to the enterprise at hand are what David Crystal refers to in his theory of "graded contrastivity" (113) as the less contrastive yet still meaningful and still publicly shared elements of intonation, which serve to convey particularities of meaning not covered by the more general functions of the closed systems.

Crystal's point is that while some aspects of intonation are clearly and completely phonemic (such as the statement/question example above), it does not follow that all other aspects of intonation are merely idiosyncratic and linguistically unimportant. Rather, in his theory there is room for intonational elements of an in-between status, which do not contain "closed systems" (113) of one-to-one relationships between variables and their referents as do more linguistically significant systems such as phonemic lexical stressing or the basic system of sentence stressing, but which impart meaning in a publicly understood manner nonetheless, as opposed to completely idiosyncratic features like voice quality. Crystal mentions as possible examples tempo variations and clipping of syllables. His purpose is to argue for the inclusion of the "less contrastive" elements of intonation in a theory of meter--an endeavor beyond the scope of the present study--but his point about graded contrastivity is relevant nonetheless. Because the type of meaning to be studied herein usually concerns the speaker's mood or attitude, it is this type of less contrastive element of intonation that I will, by and large, be dealing with. By way of illustration, a section of Chapter Five focuses on the rushed tempo which is necessitated by the excessive complexity of a seven-line term of address. The argument that the syntax mandates the increase in tempo, and that

this increase will be perceived as mimicry of the quoted speakers' hyperbole, rests on this assumption of publicly shared yet not highly contrastive systems of intonation. Since the assumption will operate behind many of the claims made in this study, it will be valuable to take a moment to consider its validity.

The assumption of partially contrastive intonational systems seems warranted by the simple fact that if such elements were not publicly shared, there would be no possibility for human communication of emotion. They are systems to the extent that they can be mutually understood, which is, obviously, quite a large extent, inclusive of virtually all native speakers of the language. Yet these systems of less contrastive, emotion-conveying intonational elements are not systematic in the sense of containing one-to-one relationships between variables and referents or producing definitely predictable forms. For this reason they have not been--and perhaps never can be--scientifically categorized, meaning there is no way to argue empirically for their existence or their manner of operation.

Furthermore, it seems to me that the existence of such partially contrastive systems might lie at the root of the myriad theoretical and applicational disputes within the field of intonation theory. Mikhail Bakhtin characterizes intonation as "[lying] on the border between the verbal and

nonverbal" (399), and Walter Ong terms oral communication a communion of interiors; these agile thinkers seem to be trying to articulate how these elements can be unorganizable into systematic correspondences yet still universally understandable. If such explanations do not satisfy, it might be noted that the present work is a literary study, not a scientific inquiry, and as such seems almost bound to contain some portions science might scoff at as intuitive or impressionistic. Indeed, there would not seem to be much use for poetry if there were not room for such richly ambivalent areas. In the interest of making my own claims as valid as possible, I employ extensive data from linguistics; should there come a point, however, where scientific validity tapers off, I will continue to be as careful as possible, but also will continue to make claims which I believe to be true and supportable, if not scientifically, then by agreement of a community of speakers and listeners. The partially contrastive aspects of intonation will constitute a basic element of this extra-scientific type of argumentation.

The last theoretical area that requires attention looms large enough to warrant a chapter of its own; this is the problem of contextualizing historically the material to be covered, in the sense of determining, insofar as possible, how the poems would have sounded in their own time and to their immediate audiences. After that question

is treated in Chapter Three, I will return to focusing on individual poems, beginning with one that presents a relatively simple interpretive debate to be addressed by phonological performance analysis. Succeeding chapters will treat poems for which the interpretive questions, and the answers suggested by the study, are of increasing complexity or ambiguity. In Chapter Nine, performance analysis will be put to a different use, that of comparing the sounds of various versions of a textually disputed work. The various background arguments and the basic information offered in this chapter and the next will, I hope, prove sufficient to guide the reader through what is to follow.

End Notes

1William Nelson has found "persuasive" evidence that "the practice of public presentation" "must have seemed of first importance" to Renaissance authors of both poetry and prose (110-111). Specifically regarding England and Donne's generation, he discusses extensive correspondence between Sir John Harrington and Sir Robert Cecil, both close acquaintances of Donne's, pertaining to the former's candidacy for the post of reader-in-ordinary to Queen Elizabeth. A formal post may or may not have actually existed, but these concrete references to the activity of reading aloud to the queen--and subsequently, to King James also--as well as Harrington's "evident pride" in his skill of "utterance," illustrate Nelson's claim for the primacy of reading aloud in the era (115). That this was not exclusively a royal activity is attested to by the Gentlewoman's Companion of the next generation (1675), wherein its author writes of the value of "daily reading to my lady. Poems of all sorts and Plays, teaching me as I read, where to place my accents, how to raise and fall my voice" (Hannah Wolley, qtd. in Nelson 116).

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

A section of the previous chapter argued for the fundamental orality of lyric poetry, on a plane equal to if not more basic than the written text. In the present chapter the goal is to contextualize historically the oral performance of lyric poetry in general, and Donne's in particular, at the turn of the seventeenth century; the purpose is to discover all we can know of how Donne imagined his verse would sound. Such questions will be addressed as the likelihood that the poet composed with oral recitation in mind, the probable manner of delivery for that imagined oral recitation, the state of English metrical theory at the time, and pronunciation differences between the seventeenth century and the present.

In seeking to establish the likelihood of Donne's composing for oral recitation rather than silent reading, the first point that needs to be made is that Donne's lyrics were not only fundamentally oral but also *primarily* oral, in that oral performance was probably the way they were most widely experienced and transmitted. It is a well-known fact that Donne resisted publication of his love poetry, to the point that the transmission of it during his lifetime was exclusively by manuscript hand-copying; with relatively few copies therefore available, listening to an oral reading was more likely to have been the method of reception for a good portion of the total audience. It seems safe to infer that the ratio of the listening to the

(silent) reading audience for Donne's unpublished poems was higher than that for the poems of a contemporary like Ben Jonson, who, though he wrote within the same cultural milieu, in which the activity of reading poetry aloud was common among the leisure class,¹ also published his work and took pains to ensure its print dissemination. Arthur Marotti has argued for Donne's membership in and composition for one likely listening audience, a coterie of young men of letters centered around the Inns of Court in the 1590's; more than likely, there were also other settings where the *Songs and Sonnets* and *Elegies* were frequently read aloud. This supposition, together with the poet's conversational style, which was discussed in the preceding chapter, indicates the probability of his having imagined vocalization as he composed.

Now that the probability that Donne wrote his lyrics with the expectation that they would be read aloud has been demonstrated, the next question to be addressed is the manner in which he expected them to be delivered, specifically with regard to the rhythm to be employed in reciting the many metrically irregular lines. It seems correct to assume that in using such a deliberately innovative style, Donne meant his lines to be recited in a manner that made that style apparent--which would, for the conversational poet, mean a manner not far removed from the rhythms of natural prose speech. But there were some in

his day--or at least a bit earlier, at the height of the Elizabethan Age--who apparently would have tried, whenever lines violated the metrical pattern established for their poems, to "wrest [the words] from [their] natural and usual sound[s]" (Gascoigne, qtd. in Youmans, 494). At least this is how Gilbert Youmans interprets the words George Gascoigne wrote in 1575; Youmans surmises that "contemporary verse was probably recited with metronomic regularity" (494). Donne's contemporary Jonson, however, while scarcely more approving of his friend's metrical practice, nonetheless provides us with a basis for establishing that another portion of the collective poetic audience did read irregular lines conversationally rather than metronomically, thereby justifying our assumption that in writing such lines, Donne intended for them to be pronounced naturally. Jonson's famous jab (reported by Drummond of Hawthornden in 1619) that "Done for not keeping of accent deserved hanging" (4) implies a set accentual pattern (presumably whichever pattern, usually iambic, is established in a given poem) that the poet in composing the lines can follow ("keep") or neglect to follow. Therefore, it seems Jonson did have the sense not to try to wrench words from their natural pronunciation by fitting them to a prescribed model; his complaint was simply that lines not adhering to the accent pattern should not be written in the first place. The existence in the poetic audience of minds

like Jonson's, along with others more like Thomas Carew's, who had nothing but praise for Donne's "fresh invention" which "to the awe of [his] imperious wit/Our stubborn language bends" (Patrides edition of Donne, 497, lines 28 and 49-50), lends foundation to the many claims to be made in the present study that rest on the assumption of conversation-like pronunciation of irregular lines.

One clarification of the expression "conversation-like pronunciation" is in order, however. Arnold Stein, perhaps the most prolific critic on the subject of Donne and prosody, admires (and agrees with) Coleridge's comment that for Donne's poetry "the sense must be understood in order to ascertain the meter" (qtd. in Stein, *Eloquence* 27), but only with the caveat against going too far in the opposite direction and reading the poetry as if it were prose, not allowing the meter to exert any influence whatsoever. In explaining that "we cannot neglect the very simple matter of allowing the iambic beat to reinforce rhetorically weak positions in the line and to heighten rhetorically strong positions. . . . Donne gives [his lines] a precisely designated enunciation beyond the skill of prose to record" (*Eloquence* 27), Stein is arguing for a middle ground between metronomical and purely conversational in the recitation of Donne's lyrics.² That is to say, for Donne at least, he subscribes--but only carefully and partially--to the controversial phenomenon rather loosely

known as *metrical stress*, which is that portion of a syllable's emphasis stemming from its falling in a metrically strong position in the line (as the even positions in an iambic line). While the meter does not take precedence over the sense, neither is it to be ignored, as would be the case in performances that sounded the lines exactly like prose; the poet of natural conversation is a poet nonetheless, and should be performed as such. Whenever the issue is pertinent to claims made in this study, I will assume this sensible position of Stein's on the question of manner of delivery.

Whatever position one takes on this question, the uncertainty among the Elizabethans regarding the manner of delivery of irregular lines and the uncertainty among 20th century prosodists regarding the existence of metrical stress are really the same question considered in different degrees and couched in different terms. In an attempt to ground the present study historically, it is worthwhile to explore the source of this centuries-long confusion, which lies at the heart of English metrical history.

The English metrical system, like so many other aspects of our literary tradition, has its origin in the Renaissance attempt to classicize the "barbarian" English tongue. What happened was that some Elizabethan poets tried to imitate the classical metrical system of quantitative verse, a system of prescribed metrical foot

types based on pairings of syllables classified by weight (length), which in Greek and Latin was highly systematic since all syllables are clearly either heavy or light (long or short) by virtue of either their structure or the duration of their vowels. In English, however, syllable weight assigned by structure (on the basis of orthography) did not correspond to the realities of pronunciation; the result of the Elizabethans' attempt was therefore clumsy, unrhythmic, unappealing "verse" that, understandably, not many persons continued to write or read. Hollander offers as an example a line of Ovid's as it was translated in an English songbook of the 1580's: *Constant Penelope sends to thee, careless Ulysses*" (81), by which the translator intended not the accentual-syllabic dactylic line he actually produced, but one that, according to the spelling of its syllables, possesses a radically different quantitative scansion.

Instead of abandoning the idea of using the revered but ill-fitting classical system, however, the Elizabethans' solution was to retain its terminology and apparatus, as, for example, in the names of the various foot types, and substitute amount of stress for syllable weight as the categorizing feature, with stressed and unstressed replacing heavy and light syllables, respectively. The new system, which came to be known as accentual-syllabic verse, thus has affinities with both

classical Greek and Latin meter and the native Anglo-Saxon poetry, whose strong-stress verse was arranged by specified numbers of stressed syllables interspersed with less regulated numbers of unstressed syllables. What is perhaps most significant about this interestingly hybrid metrical system (which contains elements of both the basic building blocks of English, the Romance-Latinate and the Germanic), is its status as a forced grafting of a metrical theory designed for languages with categorizable syllable weight onto a language whose syllables are distinguished instead by amount of stress. Although the ultimate result of the Elizabethans' experimenting with the new system and gradually adapting it to the realities of their language was the production of all the masterpieces of English poetry up until the emergence of free verse, the forced combination of metrical systems caused an inherent ambiguity regarding the pronunciation of metrically irregular lines.

The root of the puzzlement seems to lie in a fundamental difference between the exchanged categorizing features of weight and stress. Syllable weight is an inherent, immutable feature, determined, as mentioned above, by structure or vowel length, meaning there is no possibility for a speaker to vary it in an attempt to make words fit a prescribed meter.³ The structure of a syllable can obviously not be altered, and neither can the vowel

length, since to change the length of a vowel is to create a different vowel, which in most cases means to pronounce a different word, or a nonsense syllable; vowel duration is not, any more than syllable structure, at the discretion of any speaker. Therefore, metrically irregular lines in quantitative verse are violations of the established meter, pure and simple.

Syllable stress, on the other hand, while a conventionally assigned characteristic of words in the language, can be varied⁴ if a speaker wishes to vary it, albeit admittedly with quite odd results.⁵ It is conceivable, if laughably so, that the speaker of an irregular accentual-syllabic line can choose to pronounce the words with unnatural stress patterns to make them fit the established metrical pattern; stress, although determinable through systems of rules, is not an immutable characteristic of a word's phonetic makeup. An example of forced stress inversion is found in a comic version of *TAKE me OUT to the BALL GAME*, which shifts all stresses one place to the right, producing *Take ME out TO the ball GAME*; for a more serious illustration of the possibility of stress inversion, consider the modern alternative pronunciations *HARass* and *haRASS*, a case of nonphonemic stress variation. For the English accentual-syllabic system, it is therefore quite possible to imagine a word being misaccented in order to make it fit the metrical

pattern; the only reason this never occurs in pure accentual strong-stress verse (as, for example, the Anglo-Saxon verse) is that it has no rigidly set metrical patterns of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. In the English system, where the flexible feature of stress has been substituted into the heavily patterned framework of quantitative meter, a performer of irregular lines has the option, so to speak, of misaccenting the words to make them fit rather than pronouncing them naturally and thus violating the meter. Youmans surmises from Gascoigne's treatise that for most Elizabethans, meter did in fact take precedence over conversational pronunciation. And for present-day prosodists, metrical stress--if in fact it does exist--is a sort of unconscious compromise between purely conversational prose pronunciation and metronomical wrenching of stress to make words conform to established patterns.

This digression into the roots of English metrical theory has been made in hopes not only of making sense of both Gascoigne's comment and metrical stress, but also of providing a solid foundation for understanding the complex relationship between Donne's innovative metrical practice and his conversational poetic style. Stein's remark indicates his appreciation, after making a detailed study of Donne's prosodic practice, of the poet's skill in making use of metrical stress, thereby actualizing the artistic

potential in English verse of violating set metrical patterns to create fine nuances of meaning, as is the case when unaccented syllables are placed in metrically strong positions and are thereby given more accent (in Stein's words, "reinforced") than they would receive if they fell in their customary metrically weak positions. The above discussion of meter and its effect on oral performance should prove especially pertinent to the chapter on *The Extasie*, which is based on that poem's highly organized metrical scheme (a rarity for Donne). The foundation having been laid, then, we will now turn to the next historical issue that needs treatment, that of diachronic variations in the pronunciations of individual words.

The question of diachronic variations in pronunciation encompasses several distinct areas of phonetics. Perhaps the first to come to mind is alteration of the individual sounds themselves, or, more exactly, the sounds represented by the various phonemes of the language. The potentially large difference between the sounds of words in Donne's time and those in our own is limited first by the fact that the inventory of consonant sounds in English has not changed since the Middle English period, meaning that during all of Modern English (1450-present), the same consonants have been used, sounding more or less the same, and affixed to the same orthographic symbols. With regard to phonetic segments,⁶ therefore, we will be dealing only

with alterations in vowel sounds; these more unstable sounds have undergone some change over time, in both quantity (length) and quality.

The latter type of change, which seems in a sense more fundamental, occurs in two degrees: the articulatory process associated with a particular vowel letter may mutate slightly, such as when a certain vowel is said to have been raised or fronted, or the sound associated with a given orthographic symbol may change so much that it becomes a vowel of completely different quality. Though the difference in these two types of change is, strictly speaking, a matter of degree only, it is convenient to distinguish them in our thinking, for then we can breathe a sigh of relief that the "Great Vowel Shift" (the prototypical example of the second type of vowel change) was, for practical purposes, complete by the time Donne wrote his poetry.⁶ The vowel changes that have occurred since that time are chiefly changes of the first variety, often as a systematic but slight allophonic variation--that is, a variation in the way a particular phoneme is sounded in a certain phonetic environment. These two restrictions on the extent of diachronic segmental differences (the confinement to vowels rather than vowels and consonants and the completion of Great Vowel Shift) leave us with the more manageable problem of determining differences in the sounds making up individual words. Both the consonant and the

vowel sounds of the words considered in this study can therefore be assumed--but only *assumed*--to have been sounded similarly to those of modern Received Pronunciation (i.e., educated British English), except where otherwise indicated. As E. J. Dobson explains in the introduction to his monumental *English Pronunciation 1500-1700*, there existed in Donne's England much synchronic variation in the details of pronunciation, perhaps particularly in accentuation but in other aspects as well--and for many (if not most) words, one of the several forms in use turns out to be the modern RP form. It seems, then, that for words whose history is available, we can try to ascertain the form or forms most likely used by educated Londoners (which Donne, of course, was), and for other words, we can assume modern pronunciations. Given the present state of knowledge, this is as close as we can come to Donne's own pronunciation.

The second area of diachronic pronunciation variation, and perhaps the one most significant for this study, is the matter of lexical stress, or the systematic stressing of certain syllables as part of the accepted pronunciation of a word. In this area we are again aided by the fact that the basic linguistic structures of modern English were already operative by Donne's time; in *English Stress: Its Form, Its Growth, Its Role in Verse*, Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser produce evidence against the traditional

view that Germanic stress patterns predominated in the early modern period, demonstrating instead that the basic system of determining stress in contemporary English was operative continuously from the late Middle English period through the present, with no intrusion of Germanic stress patterns as was previously assumed. That our task is thus rendered more manageable does not, however, mean it will be simple. Dobson remarks straightforwardly that

The most important difference between the eModE [early Modern English] system of accentuation and that of PresE [Present English] is that in the former there survived extensive secondary stress, which seems to have remained in general use in educated speech until about 1600; but in most cases forms with single stressing had also developed by late ME [Middle English] and existed beside those with double stressing in eModE, gradually replacing them even in educated speech during the seventeenth century. (445)

Dobson's estimated date for the end of the particular phenomenon of secondary stressing--1600--almost seems contrived to give fits to a student of Donne's love poetry, none of which can be dated with certainty but which is most likely to have been composed in the vicinity of the 1590's, with some pieces arguably later (such as *The Canonization*, which many date after 1603 because of its apparent reference to King James), but with publication not occurring until 1633. The uncertainty caused by the dating problems is increased by Dobson's qualification that many words had both single-stress and double-stress forms existing side by side.

Another intriguing angle is suggested by Dobson's report that contemporary orthoepist Alexander Gill (1619) "expressly says that the retention of a secondary stress in trisyllables was characteristic of poetry and not of ordinary speech" (446). With the language in the state of flux just described, it stands to reason that speakers would feel free to use either the old form or the new to suit their purposes; it is thus quite understandable that poetry readers of metronomical bent might make use of recently or nearly obsolete secondary stress in order to make a line fit the desired meter. It also seems reasonable, however, that, given Donne's evident commitment to the conversational style in both composition and delivery, he would have expected his words to be pronounced according not to some popular poetic technique but to the natural speech of persons engaging in such emotionally heightened scenes as his poetry creates. In any event, Gill's claim underscores the central significance of the issue of accent for the oral performance of poetry. In addition to the matter of secondary stress, Dobson notes as another chief accentual difference between Donne's time and our own a general uncertainty as to the location of the primary stress in many words. As I make suppositions and comments related to stress and accent, then, I plan to bear these differences in mind and, as far as possible, take

into account the seventeenth century status of any key words whose accentuation is questionable.⁷

The third major area of diachronic pronunciation variation is what Dobson terms "sentence phonetics," by which he means adjustments in the surface structures of words for combinatory purposes in connected speech. He mentions first the contracted forms that lightly stressed grammatical words, such as conjunctions, prepositions and pronouns,⁸ assume in connected speech (as, for example, when *it* is pronounced [t] after a vowel). These forms seem for the most part unchanged from Donne's time to the present (e.g., as with [z] instead of [s], the strong form which was already rare by the sixteenth century) (Vol. II, 451). The second type of combinatory adjustment is the development of strong and weak forms of words that function as either stressed or unstressed parts of sentences, though Dobson notes that by the early modern period the strong and weak forms were no longer strictly connected to the stressed and unstressed functions. He then gives an extensive list of such dual-stress words, wherein he notes the relative frequency of each word's two forms, and whether and at what approximate time the strong form of these usually unstressed words (they are again grammatical, rather than content, words) dropped out of usage. In these lists, then, are some diachronic variations potentially

relevant to the present study, and they will be consulted as needed.

This discussion first of stress and accent⁹ and then of "sentence phonetics" leads naturally to the question of diachronic variation in two other areas of sentence phonology which are perhaps even more germane to this project: sentence stress and intonation. If it were possible to know the rules by which speakers in Donne's time used accent and pitch to signal information about what they were saying, the claims herein could be strengthened considerably. Unfortunately, however, no work on this topic seems to exist, and for the partially contrastive aspects of intonation discussed in the previous chapter, such work may very well be inherently impossible. Some work does exist, however, on the topic of general intonational differences between the U.S. and Britain, enabling me to check my conclusions, formed in relation to American speech habits, against that data. But regarding the diachronic question, I will have to operate on the faith that the modulations of the English tongue have remained fundamentally the same from Donne's time to the present.

Considering the lack of scientific documentation of the partially contrastive intonational elements, especially as described by Ong as arising out of the "communion of interiors" (179), it seems likely that such intersubjective

connections might, if any part of language could do so, be stable over time and place; smiles are smiles in any language, are they not? Universally acceptable in some cultures and less universally so in others, but signifying happiness and warmth to all people everywhere? Since I am committed to the use of the partially contrastive elements in my comments on performative features of the poems, I feel justified in assuming their continuity over time, at least to the extent necessary for my analyses to possess interpretive significance. Because there is not much we can know about the historical continuity of even the completely contrastive aspects of intonation, such as punctuational functions, it seems necessary to proceed without data regarding diachronic variations.

A note on textual matters is in order here, as a different sort of historical issue that is of paramount importance for any study on Donne. As detailed in Chapter Nine in connection with that chapter's examination of different versions of *A Hymn to God the Father*, manuscript transmission and the poet's refusal to allow publication of most of his poetry mean that it is impossible to construct authoritative texts. As Ted-Larry Pebworth demonstrates, the only versions of any poem that can possibly have been either Donne's original or Donne's revision are the various manuscript versions and the first printed edition of 1633, which was published two years after the poet's death.

Because it would not have been practical for me to use several versions of each poem--as Peabworth recommends--I have settled on 1633 as having the most authority of any available single version. The one exception to this principle is *Elegy XIX: To his Mistress Going to Bed*, which did not appear in print until 1669; for that poem I follow C. A. Patrides' printing, which takes the 1669 version as its copy text.

Having thus contextualized the project historically from several angles, I shall now turn to the first poem for which I will attempt to adjudicate the interpretive debate using evidence obtained by phonological performance analysis. As indicated earlier, this first piece will be one whose interpretive debate is relatively simple and circumscribed; the study will then progress to cases of increasing complexity.

End Notes

¹For complete documentation of the practice of oral reading, see Note 1 to Chapter 2.

²It is clear from Stein's passage that he is using *rhetorically* to mean something like "according to the stress pattern determined by the function of the words," i.e., whether they have content or are merely grammatical and whether they carry emphatic stress. For the present purpose, therefore, it is helpful to read naturally for *rhetorically*.

³Duration of a given vowel, even as it occurs in a given syllable, does, of course, vary from speaker to speaker and for the same speaker in different situations, but only within the boundaries set by the normal pronunciation of the word and the vowel phoneme. To vary syllable length

beyond those boundaries, which would be necessary in order to vary it enough to make it fit the wrong length category in quantitative verse, is not an option at the speaker's disposal.

⁴A speaker is free to vary syllable stress only provided the stress is not phonemic, which would mean that to vary it would be to utter a different word. Phonemic stress variation is, however, rare in English (see following note).

⁵Halle and Keyser quote Kokeritz, who was writing of Shakespeare's pronunciation, as having concluded that "the phonemic use of stress, illustrated in modern English by *ex'tract* (n.) versus *extract*' (vb.) is not yet fully established or fixed" (119). Four pages later, however, they quote the late-17th century orthoepist (i.e., a practitioner of the science of 'correct' pronunciation) Christopher Cooper as having in 1675 offered an extensive list of such phonemic noun-verb stress variations, thus implying that in Donne's time the phenomenon was in the process of being established. Whatever the case, this fact does not detract from my argument, since even in modern times phonemic stress variation is characteristic of only a tiny percentage of words in the language.

⁶According to the *Oxford Companion to the English Language*, the Great Vowel Shift was "a sound change that . . . ended c. 1600, changing late Middle English long, stressed monophthongs from something like the sound of mainland European languages to those that they now have: for example, Middle English *fine* had an *i* like Italian *fino*" (453).

⁷Halle and Keyser have proposed a set of transformational rules that purport to systematize EModE stress, but since predictive power is a test for, rather than a use of, transformational systems, the value of their study for our purposes lies chiefly in its status as a collective source--like Dobson--for 17th century data.

⁸Linguists make the useful distinction between *lexical items* and *grammatical items*; Crystal lists as types of the latter "pronouns . . . conjunctions, prepositions . . . auxiliaries, the items *not*, *it* (extrapositive), and *there* (existential), anaphoric items (*this* etc., *one(s)*, . . .), and determiners (*the*, *my*, *all*, *each*, etc.)" (23). Lexical items, often termed "full lexical words" or "content words," include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, which, unlike the purely syntactical grammatical items, refer to things, actions, and states in the world. The

distinction is useful here since it is grammatical terms that tend to be shortened in connected speech.

'*Stress* and *accent* are widely used interchangeably, but collectively they apply to two distinct phenomena; whenever the distinction is significant, most writers assign one word to each phenomenon, though either combination is acceptable. In the present study, the words in general application are treated as interchangeable, and when the distinction becomes relevant, *stress* will refer to lexical stress, that is, the emphasis on a given syllable compared to that on other syllables in the word, while *accent* will refer to the actual emphasizing of stressed syllables when the word is made prominent in speech. In this relationship--which is the usage most frequently chosen by modern linguists and prosodists--*stress* can be understood as the potential for *accent*.

CHAPTER FOUR: *ELEGY [XIX]: TO HIS MISTRESS GOING TO BED*

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defie,
Until I labour, I in labour lie.
The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,
Is tir'd with standing though he never fight.
Off with that girdle, like heavens Zone glittering, 5
But a far fairer world encompassing.
Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,
That th'eyes of busie fooles may be stopt there.
Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chyme,
Tells me from you, that now it is bed time. 10
Off with that happy busk, which I envie,
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.
Your gown going off, such beautious state reveals,
As when from flowry meads th'hills shadowe steales.
Off with that wyerie Coronet and shew 15
The haiery diadem which on you doth grow:
Now off with those shooes, and then softly tread
In this loves hallow'd temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes, heaven's Angels us'd to be
Receavd by men: thou Angel bringst with thee 20
A heaven like Mahomets Paradice, and though
Ill spirits walk in white, we easly know,
By this these Angels from an evil sprite,
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.
Licence my roaving hands, and let them go, 25
Before, behind, between, above, below.
O my America! my new-found-land,
My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd,
My Myne of precious stones: My Emperie,
How blest am I in this discovering thee! 30
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.
Full nakedness! All joyes are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,
To taste whole joyes. Jems which you women use 35
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in mens views,
That when a fools eye lighteth on a Jem,
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them:
Like pictures, or like books gay coverings made
For lay-men, are all women thus array'd. 40
Themselves are mystick books, which only wee
(Whom their imputed grace will dignifie)
Must see reveal'd. Then since that I may know;
As liberally, as to a Midwife, shew
Thy self: cast all, yea this white lynnens hence, 45
There is no pennance, much less innocence:
To teach thee, I am naked first; why then
What needst thou have more covering then a man.

The explicitly seductive *Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed* is the subject of much critical commentary, but only a small amount of interpretive debate of the type addressable by performance analysis. While it is impossible to deny the fundamental playfulness of the elegy, a few critics have understood the speaker's elevation of the woman to the level of *summum bonum* as serious, sincere, and nonironic in one way or another. To such critics, the lovers in the poem are not by their union committing any sin, a view consistent with the positive, "innocent" version of the textually disputed line 46, *There is no pennance due to innocence*.¹ As William Empson's disciple John Haffenden explains, this version accords with two radically different serious interpretations: Sir Herbert Grierson's view that the lovers are innocent because they are married (the poem becomes an epithalamion, with marriage as a holy state of sexual, "married" chastity) and Empson's view that they are innocent because they have established a new religion based on their love--an action made conceivable, according to Haffenden, by the Copernican revolution--and so are not under the jurisdiction of the Judaeo-Christian moral code (the poem becomes heresy). If Grierson's reading of the elegy as an epithalamion were reasonably tenable, these two would constitute the "serious" side of the serious-ironic interpretive debate to be addressed by performance

analysis. Since the epithalamion interpretation does not seem tenable, however,² Empson's reading alone will exemplify that side of the dichotomy, an expressive performance of which will portray the speaker, in his few reverent moments, as completely earnest. The opposing "ironic" side is supplied by the more prevalent understanding of the speaker's sanctification of the woman as naughty blasphemy, ironic in its equation of her charms with things divine (God, Christ, and the angels); this interpretation accords with the grammatically negative, decidedly uninnocent version of line 46, *There is no pennance, much less innocence*. Interestingly, Empson himself was well aware of the interpretive dilemma; according to Haffenden, "he [Empson] constantly pressed the point that the poem must be honourably heretical, or else it is obscene" (9).

It is the poem's manner of exposition--that is, the metaphors and similes the speaker uses in his exhortation to the woman to disrobe--rather than anything in the substance of the argument or the narration, that gives rise to the interpretive disagreement. In the course of orchestrating the detailed episode of undressing, the speaker pointedly compares his beloved to *heaven's Angels*, whom she rivals in beneficence to mankind (19), and contrasts her to a similarly-clad *evil sprite*, in opposition to whom she and the real angels are aligned

(23), and then proceeds to other outlandish, sometimes supernatural, comparisons, such as that of the lovers' naked bodies to the unbodied souls that will experience analogous joys in heaven or that of womankind to the divine source of *imputed grace* (42). If he is serious--if, to use Empson's words, Donne means what he says, and the speaker feels "genuinely exalted," with a "high moral tone" (99)--he is placing the lovers on a plane equal to, if not above, God and heaven, causing the woman to usurp the position of the divine as the speaker's highest good. If the speaker is not serious--if the outrageous comparisons, especially the religious ones, are meant ironically--he is quite the gleeful blasphemer; to judge from his boldness and sexual punning, he is having as much fun provoking God's ire as being with the woman. Performance analysis will therefore compare the solemn, genuinely exalted voice of praise of the new god which is their love to the playful naughtiness of the gleeful sinner.

Most of the poem is undeniably lighthearted, with the speaker's exuberant sexual punning couched in vigorous rhythms and unquestionably meant to be intoned with playful, even manic, energy. Performance testing is therefore applicable only to these few passages pertaining to the woman's sacredness, since the speaker's reverence or irreverence therein is the question that forms the critical debate. The crucial passages will be the ones that

directly connect the woman and the traditional objects of religious devotion--God, heaven, Christ, even (obliquely) the Blessed Virgin (if we allow M. Thomas Hester's gloss of the poem as mock Annunciation ["Re-Annunciation"])--since these will be spoken with highest seriousness or severest irony.

The first such crux is the latter half of the couplet of lines 5 and 6, *Off with that girdle, like heavens Zone glittering / But a far fairer world incompassing*. The first line of the couplet establishes the connection with holy entities by using *heavens Zone* to name the Milky Way or whichever specific part of the starry sky the speaker has in mind; in a literal sense there is nothing inordinate about his claim that the woman's beauty surpasses the stars, but by using this phrase to refer to them, the speaker ensures that his audience will know he has the spiritual heaven firmly in mind. When he then moves on to the second line of the couplet and completes the comparison, this suggestion that he deems the woman superior to the real heaven will at least have been planted in the minds of his listeners and readers. The effect is that the speaker is either solemnly proclaiming the woman's holiness or gleefully exhibiting his own blasphemy.

In this second line, the significant portion for our purposes is the adverb-adjective phrase the speaker uses to forge the comparison and proclaim the woman's outright

superiority. To give complete expression to the speaker's sarcasm, a performer of an ironic interpretation will emphasize *far fairer* quite strongly and will emphasize the fricative noisiness (termed *stridency* by linguists) of the repeated [f] sound to call attention to the speaker's comic--or perhaps derisive--mimicry. (This is a strong case of the particular optional performance feature I am labeling an *ironic punch*, which is simply the aggressive vocal jab that is commonly audible when the mischievousness or derisiveness or bitterness any performer is feeling spills over into--or is purposely injected into--his or her voice.)³ In thus releasing the beginning consonants aggressively, and accenting the key words maximally, such a reading makes ample use of not only the alliterated [f] sounds--which are typically of greater duration and produced more forcefully than their voiced counterpart [v] (Calvert 73)--but also the assonance and internal near rhyme of the phrase, to create a degree of prosodic precision⁴ that would not be possible had Donne written, for example, *far greater* or *far holier* instead of *far fairer*. Those alternative phrases would be more suited for a serious rendition of the poem, for which the performer would have to forego the potential for ironic punch contained in the natural forcefulness and repetitive emphasis of *far fairer*. A solemn performance of *far fairer* would not be impossible or even difficult, but it would

waste the sound potential of the line as written. The presence of the optional performance feature, which is the ironic punch on *far fairer*, means the line can be used to give precise emotional expression to the gleeful-sinner reading of the poem as impudent blasphemy, but the phrase does not seem to offer any similar support for a serious rendition. Furthermore, while the phrase does not function as an expressive structural element (since it does not sound inherently sarcastic) or a full-fledged performance directive (since it contains nothing that guides a performer to sound it naughtily), its patterning nonetheless would cause a performer of a serious reading to be on guard against sounding the words with a lilt inappropriate to a solemn proclamation that the woman is above even the holy. The line's structure is well equipped to enhance an ironic rendition and decidedly not equipped to enhance a serious one.

The next portion of the poem that is either reverent or blasphemous is the speaker's explicit metaphorical consecration of the prospective bed of passion in line 18, *In this loves hallow'd temple, this soft bed*. The words that will carry the reverence or blasphemy are, of course, *hallow'd temple*. A performer can pronounce them seriously without difficulty, though he or she will probably have to hold back a bit on the amount of emphasis put into them; they receive the main sentence stress regardless, but for a

serious performance this will be the sum total of accent they can receive, since anything more would likely come across as sarcasm. For an ironic, blasphemous performance, however, such jeering exaggeration would be welcome; the performer would be in effect taking advantage of the sentence stress as a foundation for adding more accent, since it is a common linguistic observation that if a word is already accented, it is easier to add more accent to it than to an unaccented word. Moreover, the phonetic structure of *hallow'd temple* equips the performer to vocalize the irony by pronouncing both words with a certain heavily aspirated release whose effect is to make a sort of mockery of the emphasis itself. Because it occurs in the initial position, the voiceless fricative [h] is pronounced rather than silent, and, as is always the case with this consonant, it assumes the formation of the following vowel ([æ]) (Calvert 70). The result is a breathy sound and a fronted, open, unrounded articulatory position for the stressed syllable of *hallow'd*. For *temple*, the simple fact that it begins with an innately harsh and heavily aspirated voiceless stop⁵ means it is similarly suited for a sarcastic exaggeration of the aspiration. The performer can give quite pointed expression to the speaker's mockery of the concept of the *hallow'd temple* by using these optional performance features to produce a double dose of exaggerated breathy emphasis of the words. Although this

is not as strong evidence for the ironic reading as was found in *far fairer*, the phrase's structure nonetheless seems considerably more equipped to be sounded naughtily than seriously.

The next passage crucial for differentiating between serious and ironic performance possibilities is the independent clause occupying line 19 and the first half of line 20, which alludes to the white of the woman's undergarments as it makes a statement about angels: *In such white robes, heaven's Angels us'd to be/Receavd by men*. The significant portion is, of course, *heaven's Angels*, because of its potential for mocking the very name of the holy creatures. The phonetic structure of the phrase contains nothing either prohibitive of or conducive to a serious performance; the words can be pronounced solemnly or indifferently, but nothing about them is particularly suited for conveying those serious interpretations. For the performance of the naughty blasphemy reading, however, the phrase works intricately to express the speaker's mockery of the heavenly beings. Metrically foregrounded by its trochaic form, which is noticeably jarring after the line has opened with two regular iambs, the phrase is further strengthened by its internal structural repetition caused by the skeletal similarity of the two words (each has two syllables, with the stress on the first) and the alliteration of the final

[z] sounds. In addition to this natural emphasis on the phrase, *Angels* itself--which, as the name of the holy creatures, would be pronounced most mockingly in an ironic reading--is suited to carrying an effective ironic punch. Featuring as it does an extra heavy syllable consisting of a diphthong ([eI]) followed by a consonant ([n]), it also carries the possibility, in the slow-speech tempo characteristic of poetry reading, of having a glottal stop interpolated before the diphthong, a way of adding extra emphasis to words beginning with vowels (Bolinger 19). For all these reasons, *heavens Angels* can be pronounced in such a way that will leave no doubt that the speaker is mocking the very holiness of the holy creatures, perhaps scornfully. To appreciate fully the importance of the repetition of the phrase and the phonetic structure of *Angels*, imagine that Donne had written instead, say, *holy beings*. The metrical situation would be unchanged (since both words are again trochaic), but the significant syllable (be-) would be less strong,⁶ and the glottal-stop potential for sarcastic emphasis would be lost. The optional performance feature arising from the phrase Donne did write thus means that an ironic reading of the line is both more precisely performable than a serious reading would be and more performable than it might have been with a different sound structure.

A fourth passage crucial for differentiating between serious and ironic performances of the elegy is line 32, which momentarily takes the poem to the height of emotion with its majestic monosyllabic allusion to St. Paul's paradox from the sixth chapter of Romans, that to be a servant of righteousness is to be free. The question is, is the structure of the line--*To enter in these bonds, is to be free*--particularly suited to one type of performance rather than the other? The key is the predicate portion of the clause, where the point is clinched. A gleefully blasphemous performance will use this opportunity of supposed high devotion and holiness to inject a maximum amount of sarcasm into almost the entire line, beginning with *these* (if not with *in*) and continuing through to the end. Testing such a performance reveals the monosyllabic structure to be quite effective in answering this call for maximum energy output throughout the line. As a string of monosyllables none of which is an article, the line from *these to free* possesses the potential of having every word accented, which makes for an appropriate expression of this apex of blasphemy with a lively, prolonged ironic punch generated by the added emphasis on and separation of each word and augmented by the gathering momentum of the uninterrupted progression. An ironically emphatic daring ridicule of the biblical idea can thus be expressed with prosodic precision and completeness: *To ENTER in THESE*

BONDS . . . IS . . . TO . . . BE . . . FREE. A serious performance, on the other hand, will accent *free*, with perhaps secondary accents on *these* and *bonds*, and deliver the entire phrase with an appropriately solemn intonation: *To ENTER in THESE BONDS is to be FREE.* There is no special difficulty in doing this, but neither is there any way, comparable to the prosodic precision of the ironic performance, to enhance the sense of deep seriousness mandated by this emotional and religious climax of the elegy. Furthermore, the muted intonation necessary to convey the seriousness wastes the monosyllable structure that was found so conducive to an ironic performance. The line is thus yet another piece of evidence that the sound structure supports a naughtily blasphemous, decidedly non-innocent interpretation of the poem.

The final opportunity in the poem for the speaker's attitude to be revealed through the emotional expressiveness of his pronunciation is lines 41-43, wherein he attributes to the woman--or, rather, to all women (40)--the ability to impute grace to a select group of men, who may then be allowed to see the women in their glorious nakedness:

Themselves are mystick books, which only wee
 (Whom their imputed grace will dignifie)
 Must see reveal'd.

Because of this acknowledgment of the speaker's dependence on the woman's discretion if he is to be allowed to view her reveal'd, the angle has shifted slightly from previous passages. The basic issue is still one of blasphemy or piety, but the speaker has put himself into a new position vis-à-vis the woman; now, all hinges on her approval and acceptance of him. The performance possibilities can still be analyzed for his expression of playful blasphemy or sincere elevation of woman to the level of dispenser of divine grace, but whatever is found will be tinted with this new shade of humility in the face of her commanding position.

In the Preface to their collection of essays on Donne's religious imagination, Raymond Frontain and Frances Malpezzi delineate a clear dichotomy, querying whether the lines are an act of "strategic blasphemy" or an emotional climax in which the speaker's "bravado falters and his real sense of sexual and spiritual helplessness comes through" (ix). The combined modifier, however, reveals a more complex interpretive situation; the speaker may well feel sexual helplessness only, not caring or even thinking of his spiritual situation, in which case he may still be blaspheming yet at this moment may come across as somber in his new supplicatory position. Sound analysis may yield a clue as to whether he feels confident--and so continues on his gleefully sinful way--or humbled, but if the latter,

the question will remain whether he is humbled merely before the woman as profane mistress or the woman as divine entity. If we hear these lines seriously, then, that does not necessarily mean he is serious about his sanctification of her; it simply means he is serious about wanting her to accept him.

That framework being established, we can turn to the lines themselves and examine them for phonetic clues to the speaker's mental state. Interestingly, when we do so we find surprisingly few suggestions of playfulness such as we found in the other crucial passages. The important phrase--the parenthetical clause of line 42--contains no repetitive constructions similar to *far fairer*, no exaggerations of breathlessness as in *hallow'd temple*, no extra strong, potentially biting syllables like those in *heavens Angels*, no string of monosyllables waiting to be emphasized in hyperbolic irony, or any other words or portions that seem expressive of irreverence. On the contrary, the sound effects seem appropriate for somber delivery. The key words are sophisticated and multisyllabic (*imputed* and *dignifie*), the arrangement of segments is balanced rather than playfully repetitive, and the only sound occurring in more than one word is the high back rounded vowel [u] of *Whom* and *imputed*, which seemingly would be more likely to suggest either doom or consolation than playfulness. A straightforward, serious

interpretation of the speaker's attitude at this point is clearly more performable than an ironic one, for which there is no apparent structural basis. Because of the qualification discussed in the preceding paragraph, however, this evidence of his seriousness does not conflict with the evidence of irony discovered in most of the poem.

The portrait of the speaker drawn by the phonetic evidence as a whole is one of an aroused seducer flattering his partner with playful blasphemy, but at this moment recognizing with a flicker of sobriety that as a sexual being he is at the mercy of womankind.

As mentioned at the outset, the critical debate over the tone of *Elegy XIX* is not much of a debate. Few readers accept arguments that read a "high moral tone" (Empson 99) into the purportedly devout passages when the rest of the poem is so incessantly naughty, especially after they have been advised by the title that this fellow is addressing his mistress--not his wife--at the start of one of their illicit encounters. (The title is likely a copyist's addition, but virtually all modern editions, except Grierson's and those derived therefrom, include it, making it part of the artifact for modern critics.) Performance analysis has shown that not only the sexual jokes but also the passages that ostensibly elevate the mistress to the level of God and Christ are structured phonetically so as to better support an ironically blasphemous interpretation

than a serious one--but not many would challenge that interpretation to begin with. The exercise, however, has demonstrated the capacity of the phonological approach to question the semantic-phonological cohesion of readings by eminent critics, and, in extreme cases like this one, even to dismiss those readings on performance grounds. A poem with a less extreme and therefore more significant case of critical disagreement will perhaps provide, in the next chapter, a more useful application of the technique.

End Notes

¹For this poem, which was first included in a published collection of Donne's work in 1669, I follow Patrides' printing, which is based on that 1669 text but emended in several places, including line 46. Patrides' note indicates the difficulty of choosing which version to print, but he selects one of the *much less* versions rather than 1669's *due to*.

²While the conventions of the epithalamion genre, as detailed in Thomas Greene's article, allow for ribaldry and even occasional suggestions that the bride's beauty awes even the angels (224), it does not seem reasonable to view this poem as a sincere epithalamion. It lacks the main requirement, that the poem celebrate a specific and specified wedding, and, furthermore, its repeated idolatrous comparisons--which constitute the focus of my analysis--seem to go too far in their blasphemy for the poem to be understood as a serious blessing of a marriage. It does seem, however, that *Elegy XIX* may have been intended as a mockery of the genre, including as it does several of the common conventions thereof. What is untenable is Grierson's attempt to soften the sinfulness by printing *due to* in line 46 and labeling the poem an epithalamion.

³The four terms original in this study are introduced in Chapter One. Optional performance features, as well as performance directives and expressive structural elements, are defined and discussed therein, while the ironic punch is mentioned (with regard to *enjoy* in *A nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day*) but not elaborated. It is an optional

performance feature potentially used in pronouncing any syllable whose structure is suited to carrying a vocal jab of sarcasm or mockery.

⁴Here--and in most other occurrences in this study--I am using *prosody* in its British linguistic sense, in which it refers to the area of phonology dealing with such speech phenomena as length, rhythm, stress, pitch, intonation, and loudness. Occasionally I will use the word in its American sense of *versification*, but the context should make clear when *prosody* is meant in that less technical sense.

⁵The inherent harshness of voiceless stops is demonstrated by Reuven Tsur(3); this characteristic as well as the fact of strong aspiration of this class of consonants when they occur in word-initial position is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, where they form a large portion of the analysis of *The Canonization*.

⁶Since it contains a long vowel, *be-* is also a strong syllable. Linguists, however, divide syllables into three parts--the *onset* (any consonants preceding the vowel), the *nucleus* (containing the vowel), and the *coda* (any consonants following the vowel)--and group the latter two together as the *rhyme*, which is recognized as more important than the onset in syllable phonetics. *An-*, whose rhyme consists of a vowel plus the following consonant, can thus be considered a stronger syllable than *be-*, whose rhyme contains only a vowel.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CANONIZATION

For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsie, or my gout,
My five gray haire, or ruin'd fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place, 5
Observe his honour, or his grace,
Or the King's reall, or his stamped face
Contemplete, what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love? 10
What merchants ships have my sighs drown'd?
Who saies my teares have overflow'd his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veines fill
Adde one more to the plague Bill? 15
Soldiers finde warres, and Lawyers finde out still
Litigious men, which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.

Call us what you will, wee are made such by love;
Call her one, mee another flye, 20
We're Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us finde the'Eagle and the dove,
The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutrall thing both sexes fit, 25
Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

Wee can dye by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombes and hearse,
Our legend bee, it will be fit for verse; 30
And if no peece of Chronicle wee prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes;
As well a well wrought urne becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombes,
And by these hymnes, all shall approve 35
Us Canoniz'd for Love.

And thus invoke us; You whom reverend love
Made one anothers hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage,
Who did the whole worlds soule contract, and drove 40
Into the glasses of your eyes
So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize,
Countries, Townes, Courts: Beg from above
A patterne of our love. 45

Of all the poems to be considered in this study, none has received more varied or extensive critical treatment than *The Canonization*, and for good reason. Dayton Haskin labels the work an appropriate piece on which to test a theory of poetry (18), which is precisely how it functions in major works of arguably the two premier critical movements of the twentieth century, New Criticism (Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn*) and deconstruction (Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Practice after Structuralism*). The poem also proves appropriate for testing the theory being explored in the present study. Analyzing its sounds yields clear phonetic evidence that can be applied to the genuine interpretive debate regarding the five complex stanzas, which detail the evolution of the speaker's thought from a position of defensiveness to the confident proposal that he and his beloved be *Canoniz'd for Love* (36).

With regard to the central interpretive question to be addressed herein--that of the speaker's tone as he proposes the canonization--fundamentally sincere readings view the speaker's suggestion of sainthood for him and his beloved as a straightforward, serious proposal for a new religion of love, while fundamentally ironic readings view the proposition as designed to poke jibes at either the folly of love, the process of canonization, the system of courtly

favor, or various combinations of all three. The sincere readings are exemplified by Brooks--who argues that the poem "takes both love and religion seriously" ("Paradox" 67)--and many of his followers,¹ while the ironic readings come from a wider range of critics, the most recently influential of whom is perhaps Arthur Marotti, who identifies the poet with the speaking persona and reads the poem as a piece of clever comic irony Donne purposely put forth both to voice his frustration at court and to gain certain "playful control" (163) over his coterie audience.

Other ironic readings include those by John Clair, who claims the poem meticulously follows the Roman Catholic *processus* for canonization and therefore is to be understood as expressing throughout "the ironic antithesis between the lover and saint" (302), and by C. Thomas Hester, who views it as one of many Donne lyrics cast in the language of the Catholic-Protestant debate for the purpose of ironically saying things that "'[could] not be said'" by the Recusant Donne in oppressive late Tudor-early Elizabethan England. In this ongoing critical conversation, evidence has proliferated--evidence from structural, etymological, biographical, theological, historical, and neo-historical sources--but none, to my knowledge, from the sounds of the poem's words. Perhaps the application of the phonological evidence uncovered by the present study may help adjudicate the debate.

Our task, then, is to examine the sound structure of *The Canonization* to see whether it facilitates more completely a performance casting the speaker as a solemn, reverent fellow who takes himself and his beloved quite seriously, or one casting him as witty, irreverent, and prone to mockery. We will, of course, focus on those passages whose tone is in question; as is the case with most poems, only certain portions are subject to differing serious and ironic performances. The first stanza of the poem, which begins with the well-known *For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love*, is one of the unquestioned portions; the speaker's clear-cut defensive--even abrasive--posture persists throughout the stanza, leaving little room for questions of sincerity; interpreters have no debate here. The second stanza, however, does give rise to a peripheral debate concerning the speaker's ironic distance from the Petrarchan maladies he lists, although his attitude in this regard has no necessary bearing on the question of the supposed central irony of the poem, his sincerity or mockery in proposing the religion of love. That is, it is conceivable, if unlikely, that he could maintain a nonironic stance here and still be fundamentally ironic in his proposal of the canonization. Any evidence discovered in this stanza will thus serve to indicate the speaker's sincerity or mockery regarding the Petrarchan

maladies, but will exert only indirect influence on the final interpretive decision.

The differentiating feature between a performance in which the speaker sincerely argues that the several forms of lovesickness from which he suffers will do no harm to others and one in which his purpose is rather to mock either the conventions or inferior lovers who do suffer such lovesickness seems to be the absence or presence of what I have labeled an *ironic punch* in the sounding of the names of the maladies. For either type of reading, all words referring to the maladies and their potential effects will be accented, making for a vivid, heavily accented string of rhetorical questions in lines 11-15, its vividness increased by the repetition of the opening interrogative structure in the last three instances. The difference will be that in a mocking performance, *sighs* (11), *teares* (12), *colds* (13), and *heats* (and perhaps also *veins fill*) (14) will be sounded with an added touch of sarcasm, mostly in the release phase of their pronunciation. Since the accent patterns will not vary--at least not systematically--between the two performances, the only type of evidence that may indicate one performance over the other will be qualities of the words themselves that facilitate their carrying the biting extra emphasis that is the ironic punch. An effective performance of either reading of the stanza is quite possible; the

question is whether a performance of an ironic reading of the stanza, accomplished by the ironic punch on some or all of the key words, is facilitated or even, to use Attridge's term, "enforced" (297) by the phonetic characteristics of those words. As it turns out, performance analysis reveals the presence of the potential--but only the potential, not the directive--for ironic punch on each of the four phrases.

For *sighs*, the optional performance feature of ironic punch rests not in the onset of the syllable but in its nucleus and coda, to use the traditional linguistic terms (introduced in Note 6 of the previous chapter) for the beginning, middle, and end of a syllable: the diphthong [aI] followed by the voiced fricative [z] makes for a heavy rhyme (i.e., nucleus plus coda) that can readily be drawn out in ironic emphasis. In the next two lines, the key words *teares* and *colds* begin with voiceless stop consonants, which are notable in several respects for their capacity for forceful pronunciation. Since stops, which are also known as plosives, are those consonants the production of which involves complete stoppage of the air flow from the lungs, then if they are released there is a more or less strenuous letting out of pent-up air compared to other types of sounds. The voiceless stops ([t], [k], and [p]) have some further distinctions that contribute to their aggressive potential: they are generally held more

tensely and for a longer period of time than are their voiced counterparts (for the record: [d], [g], [b]) (Calvert 58-68), and, as Reuven Tsur documents, they tend to be positively correlated with aggression in the poetry of many languages (3). Furthermore, and perhaps most significant for our purposes, when voiceless stops occur as the initial consonants in stressed syllables, as they do in *teares* and *colds*, they are aspirated upon release, which means a puff of air is emitted before the onset of voicing of the following vowel. This aspiration can be made audible for emphasis and is a useful tool for expressing either sarcasm or anger; exaggerating it in this manner is thus an optional performance feature that constitutes an effective ironic punch. Furthermore, the repetitive structure that places *colds* in precisely the same syntactical and metrical position as *teares* adds to the effect: *Who saies my TEARES . . . ? / When did my COLDS . . . ?*

This repetition of structure continues in the next line, with *heats* now in the spotlighted position. Although *heats* lacks the phonetic potential for ironic punch of *teares*, *colds*, or even *sighs* (since it contains nothing comparable to a forceful initial consonant or a diphthong that can be drawn out for emphasis), its vowel is tense and high and therefore suitable for carrying the emphasis that comes from the structural repetition. Moreover, for each

item in the string except the first there is a possibility for contrastive stress, contrastive stress that will increase in strength as the speaker goes on to add yet another form of lovesickness to his already hyperbolic list; if the performer does use this type of extra emphasis--which accords perfectly with the speaker's ridiculing of the Petrarchan excesses--it will be strongest on *heats*. This fact, coupled with the elaboration *which my veins fill*, means that a performer naming the maladies jeeringly will be able to use this line (14) to continue his jeering with virtually as much direct force as with the preceding three lines.

In the passage as a whole, then, the central tools for expressing the mockery are the voiceless stops, as discussed above; based on their force and augmented by the additional possibilities in *sighs* and *heats*, the four line passage contains several optional performance features for conveying the speaker's ridicule of the Petrarchan ills. There is no insistence or even encouragement that they be actualized, however, because the accents and the vigorous rhythms of the rhetorical questions will obtain even in a sincere reading of the stanza. Therefore, these potentialities constitute interpretive evidence of only the weakest sort. And since the issue is, as explained above, only peripheral to the main interpretive question we are

trying to answer, it will be wise to delay any conclusions at this point.

In the third stanza of *The Canonization* we finally come upon some prosodic guidance regarding the central question of the speaker's sincerity or mockery regarding the lovers' sainthood. The delivery of the opening two lines of this stanza does not vary significantly with the speaker's seriousness or irony, but that of line 21 does. Prompted by Marotti's coterie-poet thesis, one can picture Donne or one of his peers reading with delight *We're Tapers too, and at our owne cost die* (21), adding a naughtily comic touch to the fundamental irony by building to a climax of sexual innuendo with the final pun. Such a performance will accent each of the final three words, the last one most of all. And a test performance demonstrates that the phonetic structure of the phrase equips one to effect the crescendo: three heavy monosyllables (a diphthong plus a consonant [owne], an ending consonant cluster [cost], and a final diphthong [die])² in succession, the most important one coming last in both a line and a sentence and being set apart by what Arnold Stein labels "an unyielding combination of consonants" ("Couplet" 687). What he means is that in the careful enunciation normal for poetic recitation, there is an unnatural pause between *coste* and *die*, which in ordinary connected speech are run together.³ The weight of each of

the three words, combined with this extra pause before the formation of *die*, thus facilitates the added emphasis stemming from the speaker's self-conscious naughtiness; he wants his audience to get the pun and to know he is punning quite pointedly.

The pun can hardly be ignored even for a sincere performance of the line, but the performer will need to subordinate it intonationally, especially since it leads into the sentence regarding the eagle and the dove, which contains serious religious associations and would in a sincere reading need to be spoken with appropriate solemnity. At issue in the contrast between the two performances is the strength of the accent peak on *die*; it carries the most prominent accent in either reading, but in the ironic reading--just examined--that prominence is noticeably exaggerated. To convey the respect required by the sincere reading, the crucial phrase must be downplayed by sounding *die* less emphatically, perhaps at a lower pitch. This downplay can be achieved, but hardly without forsaking, to some degree at least, the careful speech normal for poetic recitation; whenever the words are enunciated in that mode, Stein's "unyielding" consonant combination of adjacent dental stops forces the unnatural pause, and thus the extra emphasis. This point can be appreciated by imagining Donne to have written instead *for our own shame die*; here, there is no difficulty in careful

enunciation of the adjacent consonants, so that no extra emphasis is mandated by the phonetic structure.⁴ *Owne cost die* thus contains a performance directive that pushes rather strongly for an ironic performance of the line, and is therefore solid evidence for an ironic interpretation of the poem, at least at this point.

Stanza three contains at least two other passages with which the performer can convey the ironic stance with prosodic precision but which offer no such possibility for the expression of a sincere reading. The first of these rests on a case of accent that will predictably be cued by upward pitch obtrusion. The naughty courtier's delivery of *we two being one, are it* (24) will rise markedly in pitch on the final word, as if to underscore the speaker's joy at the absurdity of equating the lovers, on the basis of their sexual talents, with the immortal phoenix. Considering the phonological situation of the line, we find that regardless of which type of reading is being performed, it will receive emphatic accent by virtue of its element of surprise, and, furthermore, the vowel ([I]) is high and unrounded, with a perceived frequency near the upper end of the range (as established by acoustic phonetics), thus leading to a natural raising of pitch on the syllable. Therefore, the additional emphasis and pitch height the comic-ironic performer gives the word to convey his glee thus merely builds on what is already present by virtue of

both accent rules and phonetics; it will be accented no matter what, so that it is a natural step to accent it more forcefully in expression of the speaker's impudence. For a sincere reading of the poem, which calls for a downplaying of emphasis similar to that of *die* in line 21, performance testing reveals that the natural upward pitch obtrusion on the final word renders the interpretation quite difficult if not virtually impossible to perform. To sound it in such a way as to express sincerely the proposition that the lovers by their sexual prowess achieve the status of the legendary phoenix, an immortal type of Christ, the performer will have to make a conscious, awkward effort to lower the naturally elevated pitch of the word enough to avoid sounding flippant, but not so much as to lose the contrastive accent. The difficulty of accomplishing such a feat means that it contains a performance directive, at least as strong as that of *die*, in favor of the ironic interpretation of the poem.

The final occasion for sound precision in stanza three is also the first in a sequence of three highly similar phonetic structures occurring in three metrically identical locations in the poem,⁵ in each of the conspicuously shortened final lines of the last three stanzas. The accented second syllable of *Mysterious* (27), and the accented first syllables of *Canoniz'd* (36) and *patterne* (45), all begin with voiceless stops (or stop clusters),

whose potential for aggressive pronunciation was discussed above in connection with *teares* and *colds* in stanza two. The present sequence represents the entire set of these voiceless plosives ([t], [k], and [p]); the last two occur in phonetic environments that cause aspiration, while the first is part of a cluster (-st) and as such is not automatically aspirated, but can be for added emphasis. Therefore, we have here three highly similar consonants, each beginning an accented syllable in a metrically and syntactically conspicuous position in the poem, and each possessing the potential for forceful delivery and reception characteristic of voiceless stops, such as the longer, tenser holding before release and the inherent tendency to be perceived as harsh. Furthermore, they occur in order of increasing potential for strong aspiration: the first is muted by the preceding [s] and is not inevitably aspirated; the second, while aspirated as strongly as the third, has its biting effect relatively muted by its articulatory location in the back of the mouth; and the third has its unmitigated explosive emphatic potential increased further by the accumulated repetitive effect of the three identical line and stanza positions, which will, of course, be strongest in the last occurrence. Considering the central significance of these key words, whose meanings lie at the core of the poem's linkage of sexuality with religion, it seems clear that in accenting

them, a performer can seize upon the stops' forceful potential to convey irony--whether comic, derisive, or bitter--quite effectively.

In the case of a sincere performance of the poem, in which the speaker is seriously proposing religious sainthood for the lovers, the plosives not only do not aid the performer's rendition of the lines, but also constitute obstacles to a solemn pronunciation of the words. The difficulty arises when the performer attempts to emphasize the words in order to convey their importance; in accenting the appropriate syllables, he or she must make an effort to buffer the releases--especially the aspirated final two, *Canoniz'd* and *patterne*--to keep them from sounding biting or harsh. Were the words not given much prominence, this would be easy, but there is a certain difficulty in pronouncing an isolated, lexically significant accented syllable beginning with a voiceless stop without releasing the consonant rather bitingly and with somewhat explosive aspiration. In order to give sufficient strength to the syllable, the performer must somehow produce the consonant emphatically but without the sensation of letting out pent-up hostility; possible, perhaps, but challenging, and failing to make use of the phonetic potential of the words. Yet that is what would need to be done for a prosodically precise sincere performance. With regard to these key words, then, the optional performance feature of aggressive

release encourages its own actualization; a sincere interpretation of the poem is, in these important lines of three different stanzas, quite a bit less performable than an ironic interpretation.

While these concluding lines, to which I shall return shortly, are perhaps the most prominent possibilities in stanzas four and five for expressive precision in the performance of *The Canonization*, some other passages are important also. In stanza four, the most notable of these is *pretty rooms* (32), whose tone Wilbur Sanders describes as "bemused flimsiness" (53). Sanders is referring, no doubt, to the phrase's lexical connotations of levity or triviality, but it also seems that another reason the phrase seems flimsy--and therefore inconsistent with a serious interpretation of the proposed religion of love--is that it contains an expressive structural element that contributes to its being perceived as lightweight and therefore ironic. Definitions and connotations aside, *pretty simply sounds* frivolous when compared with, say, *beautiful* or *lovely* (which provides a more valid contrast since it retains the metrical arrangement of the original). The beginning consonant cluster dominated by the voiceless stop [p], the two short, high, unrounded vowels (both, at least in modern RP, being [ɪ]), and the crisply pronounced [t] (since Britons do not flap this consonant as Americans do)⁶ which connects them, all contribute to a rapid,

high-pitched pronunciation of the word that suggests its lack of solemnity. The phonetic makeup of the phrase thus ensures its being sounded in such a way as to express the sense that the *sonnets pretty roomes* cannot measure up to the holiness or nobility of tombs or chronicles. The equation of the lovers with saints falls short phonologically as well as lexically, in the same way, incidentally, that sonnets--which commanded less respect in Donne's day than they have in subsequent generations--fall short of the dignity and timelessness of stately chronicles. If a sincere performance is attempted, the phonetic connotation of triviality will still be present, as a momentary deviation from the intonational integrity of the performance. Not fatal, perhaps, but not helpful either. The phrase thus contains a small but definite piece of evidence for the ironic interpretation of the poem: an expressive structural element guaranteeing that the line will, in this regard, sound ironic, for any and all possible renditions.

Some other possibilities for prosodic expressiveness in stanzas four and five are also important. Perhaps the most notable is found in the final stanza, in the overly complex imagined address by the future lovers to the speaker and his beloved, which occupies six lines and parts of two other lines before he finally reaches the substance of what is being said to him and the woman. The sheer

excess of both the sentence (six clauses in lines 37-44) and especially the double clause (lines 42 and 43) that many editors place in parentheses in an effort to minimize confusion leaves the performer with no choice but to rush through the words, in a desperate effort to indicate to the listeners that this is all one sentence, this clause is parenthetical, and if we can just hurry and get it out of the way the whole thing will make sense. The syntax of the stanza thus rather interestingly determines the performance of certain lines within it. And the aspect of the performance that is so determined--the tempo--in turn limits the performer's expressive possibilities; it would prove all but impossible to maintain a serious, reverential tone while rushing through the successive clauses, trying frantically to avoid losing the audience's attention. Brooks finds the stanza expresses "a violent squeezing as of a powerful hand," resulting from the lovers' having become "like the saint, God's athlete" ("Paradox" 69); phonologically, however, it seems the squeezing of the words negates the possibility of their being delivered reverently. The rushing of the words fits perfectly, however, with a comic-ironic interpretation, since with it the performer conveys vocally what the speaker views as the imagined future lovers' excess, as evidenced by his mimicking their struggle to get as many points of praise as possible into their already exaggerated invocation. Thus

we have a quite insistent performance directive in favor of the ironic reading.

When the performer of such a reading finally reaches the request portion of the invocation, *patterne* provides the final tool for expressing the speaker's sarcasm. This third instance of the voiceless stop series seems particularly appropriate in its context. The extremely strong aspiration potential resulting from its articulation in the very front of the mouth, seems especially suited for expressing the speaker's mocking of the imagined future admirers. Try it yourself and see: A *PATterne* of our love. A performer attempting to convey a sincere interpretation--as that of Brooks, who remarks that "the tone with which the poem closes is one of triumphant achievement" ("Paradox" 69)--would be faced with the previously discussed challenge of muting this expressive potential while retaining the sentence accent on the syllable.

In each of the performance cruxes we have examined, we have found that the line's sound structure, if not expressly suited to conveying the sense of irony directly--as was, for example, the line containing *pretty*--can nonetheless be used to give precise vocalization to an ironic interpretation, while a performance of a sincere interpretation must mute the expressive possibilities. We have found several instances

(*die, it, pretty*, the excess in the final stanza) in which a performer attempting a sincere interpretation would find it difficult to pronounce certain syllables with enough solemnity to give accurate expression to his or her intended meaning, and several other instances (the stops throughout the poem) in which more accurate sound expression is possible for an ironic interpretation than for a sincere interpretation. By utilizing the full potential for matching sound and sense, ironic performances of *The Canonization* actualize its complex and sophisticated artistry.

This analysis of *The Canonization* has yielded a collection of phonetic evidence all of which suggests an ironic performance of the poem to be more completely realizable than a sincere performance. The next chapter will turn to a lyric for which performance analysis points to a more mixed answer to the interpretive debate.

End Notes

¹Some examples of straightforward readings include those by A. J. Smith, Earl Miner, N. J. C. Andreasen, and Albert C. Labriola.

²Though Dobson (516) finds evidence that some educated speakers in the sixteenth century shortened the diphthong in *die* to a monophthong when it occurred in an absolutely final position (as it does here), this short-lived form was never the sole form and, moreover, was in transition out of the language by Donne's time.

³In linguist's terms, the similar articulation of the dental stops that end and begin *coste* and *díe* means that in the careful speech normal for poetic recitation, their separate formation necessitates an unnatural pause between the release of *coste* and the closure for *díe*; in ordinary connected speech there is a single closure and release for both stops.

⁴I am indebted to Professor Lisi Oliver for this example.

⁵The metrical situation is that the three lines (27, 36, 45) are specimens of nearly perfect iambic trimeter occurring quite conspicuously at the ends of stanzas otherwise consisting of more or less irregular tetrameter and pentameter lines. The accentual peak of each line is the syllable beginning with the voiceless stop, which in each case is the second syllable of the line; the regular iambic beat of the emphatically shortened lines thus falls on these accented syllables.

⁶Flapping is a manner of producing *t* and *d* sounds in certain phonetic environments; it involves raising the tip of the tongue to the alveolar ridge very rapidly and releasing it so as to produce a consonant that is more rapid than the regular [t] or [d] sounds. Flapped *t* is closer to an ordinary *d* than to an ordinary *t*; compare the American pronunciation of *Betty* (flap) with that of *bet tea* ([t]) and with that of the nonsense word formed by substituting a [d]: *beddy*.

CHAPTER SIX: *TWICKNAM GARDEN.*

Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with teares,
Hither I come to seeke the spring,
And at mine eyes, and at mine eares,
Receive such balmes, as else cure every thing,
But O, selfe traytor, I do bring 5
The spider love, which transubstantiates all,
And can convert Manna to gall
And that this place may thoroughly be thought
True Paradise, I have the serpent brought.

'Twere wholsomer for mee, that winter did 10
Benight the glory of this place,
And that a grave frost did forbid
These trees to laugh and mocke mee to my face;
But that I may not this disgrace
Indure, nor yet leave loving, Love let mee 15
Some senslesse piece of this place bee;
Make mee a mandrake, so I may grow here,
Or a stone fountaine weeping out my yeare.

Hither with christall vyals, lovers come, 20
And take my teares, which are loves wine,
And try your mistresse Teares at home,
For all are false, that tast not just like mine;
Alas, hearts do not in eyes shine,
Nor can you more judge womans thought by teares,
Then by her shadow, what she weares. 25
O perverse sex, where none is true but shee,
Who's therefore true, because her truth kills mee.

The interpretive debate concerning the speaker's tone in the lament over unrequited love that is usually entitled *Twicknam Garden* is crystallized by Sallye Sheppard, who sees the poem as an elaborate Petrarchan compliment, couched in heavy religious and biblical imagery, to the unattainable lady; Sheppard views the speaker as a "self-professed . . . miserable lover" (65) whose "empassioned complaint" is "not wholly frivolous," but neither is it "so grim as most critics hold" (65). Although Sheppard reaches a rather unusual conclusion, that the speaker's

goal is to seduce the lady, her view of his self-consciousness nonetheless places her in the category of those who find the poem to be a less than straightforward expression of unalloyed despair. A more extreme reading of the poem as less than sincere is that of A. J. Smith, who sees it as "huge high-comic hyperbole" (51) which, interestingly for the present project, he finds "built into the movement" (51), though he declines to elaborate on that comment. Another who doubts the purity of the speaker's pain is Richard Hughes, who understands the poem as a public piece expressive of less than genuine emotion. The element that ties these readings together, then, is their view of the speaker as posturing in some manner or another; the opposition of this posturing to the more common reading of the speaker's stance as despairing forms the interpretive dichotomy to be addressed by performance analysis.

One of those critics with whom Shepheard expressly takes issue is N. J. C. Andreasen, whose reading provides an illuminating contrast to Shepheard's, since both commentators understand and appreciate the speaker's complete responsibility for his pain, but disagree pointedly about his attitude toward his self-inflicted misery: Shepheard says he "purposefully exaggerates his plight" (65), in an effort to "precipitate the lady's fall" (67), while Andreasen describes him as "terrifyingly

bitter" (151), and exhibiting "a harsh and vindictive response to scorn" (151). Sheppeard finds him "waltzing . . . into the garden" (65), but Andreassen claims the poem contains "no lightness or wit to alleviate its sighs and tears" (151). Both critics cannot be right, at least not completely. Their conversation thus provides a neatly delineated debate which can be adjudicated by performance testing. Several revealing moments provide opportunities for sound analysis and consideration of intonational possibilities.

The first such moment lies in the metrical melody of the opening line, which Sheppeard finds suggestive of a waltz. It seems she is on the right track in identifying the significance of the rhythm, but perhaps doesn't go quite far enough in her description. With the strong contrasts between its stressed and unstressed syllables, the line is almost rollicking in its motion. Two of the four strongly accented words, *blasted* and *surrounded*, are multisyllabic and inflected with null-stressed suffixes, while the other two focal words are monosyllabic and preceded by the almost null-stressed grammatical *with*. Both these arrangements, which together account for nine of the line's ten syllables, make for maximum accentual contrast between the alternating stressed and unstressed positions, creating a high-spirited effect made especially significant by its positioning so as to set the tone for

the poem. The line effectively causes a performer to come out singing whether he or she means to or not, at least unless he or she tries very hard to suppress the syllabic and vocalic undulations. As a metrical effect determined by the choice and arrangement of the words, this rollicking rhythm constitutes an expressive structural element decidedly in favor of Sheppeard's relatively lighthearted "waltzing entrance" (65); perhaps the many critics who have agreed with Andreasen that the poem contains "no lightness or wit" (151) may have allowed themselves to be inundated by the sighs and tears of the poem as a whole so that they neglected to consider the sound effect of this important line.

The next phonological clue opens line 5: *But O, selfe traytor, I do bring/The spider love, which transubstantiates all*. The literal meaning of the prefatory phrase--as well as of the appellation *selfe traytor*--leans toward the posturing rather than the despairing, although it could conceivably be read either way. The phonetic structure, however, is clearly more conducive to an expression of self-mockery than to the maintenance of an attitude of straightforward bitterness. *But O* features a vowel pattern of short, unrounded [ʌ] followed by long, strongly rounded [oʊ], which requires a lax-to-tense movement of the vocal apparatus; a syllabic pattern of weak followed by strong; and a syntactical

position preceding a comma, which, of course, cues a pause before the performer goes on to *selfe traytor*. All three elements work in harmony to provide a performer with the tools for a more or less resounding emphasis of *O*. For the hyperbolic, posturing interpretation of the poem, the performer can use the phrase to render a definite sense of the speaker's stepping back and looking at himself, with a touch of amusement, perhaps accomplished with a strong downward pitch turn on the [oU]; the effect is that of "but OH, I know about YOU!" For Andreassen's interpretation, emphasizing bleak despair, the phonetics of the phrase have a similar potential for intonational precision (the words could readily be pronounced with a prolonged accent of acute pain on *O*), but actualizing that potential causes an outpouring of direct pain which is conspicuously incongruent as an introduction to the automatically distancing act of labeling performed by *selfe traytor*, and so would not be feasible as a logically consistent performance. For such a reading, it would be more effective to avoid the incongruence by sounding *But O* unemphatically, rendering the line a brief jab of self-recrimination, for which *selfe traytor* is not inconsistent; such a performance, however, wastes the emphatic sound potential of *But O* as well as much of its connotational meaning. The phrase thus contains an optional performance feature--the playfully resounding

emphasis on *O*--that can be used to express the posturing reading, but no equally feasible possibility for conveying the despairing interpretation.

A third clue to the speaker's tone in the first stanza is an alliterated phrase which is similar to *But O* in that it functions primarily as an intensifier. In line eight, the adverb-verb combination *thoroughly be thought*, which serves the grammatical purpose of intensifying its object *True Paradise* (9), creates a playful lisp with its repetition of *th*- segments. This expressive structural effect of playfulness is subtle and probably even subliminal in that it would not be heard as an intrusion in a somber recital of the poem, but it forms the basis of an optional performance feature which can be used to convey the speaker's aptly subdued yet unmistakable caricature of himself and of the fact that humans do voluntarily cause their own unhappiness. By exaggerating the force of the alliterated consonants and playing vocally on the repetition itself, a performer can give revealing expression to the speaker's hyperbolic self-mockery. Both the presence of the structural sound effect and the possibility of exaggerating it, then, impart a posturing rather than a despairing quality to the intensifying function of the phrase.

No matter how much posturing we find in the opening stanza--whether bordering on the playful as in the rhythm

of the opening line or on the self-mocking as in *thoroughly be thought*--there is no doubt that the speaker does feel some genuine pain in stanza two. The chief evidence of such pain is the phrase *mock me to my face*, whose phonetic structure works in tandem with its lexical meaning to convey an intensely personal sense of the speaker's pain. In this deepest point of the speaker's distress, and intonational climax of the stanza, the alliterated [m] sounds force the lips to close three times in rapid succession, suggesting by the performer's articulatory movements a solemn, even bitter, attitude on the part of the speaker. Moreover, the phrase also contains a rather strong potential for being pronounced in such a manner as to express absolute disgust. M is one of the consonants especially suited for a particular variety of vocal gesture that consists of lengthening an initial consonant in order to express a word forcefully, which accomplishes the same purpose as interpolating a glottal stop before words beginning with vowels (discussed in Chapter Four in relation to *heavens Angels* in *Elegy XIX*). As Dwight Bolinger explains the gesture, the consonant is lengthened by delaying its release, with lips and jaw clenched, making a vocalization that falls into the same general category as those gestures often referred to when a speaker is described as "biting off his words" (19): *m-m-MOCK me to my face*,¹ where the series of m's preceding the release of

the initial M represents the building of pressure which will culminate in the extra forceful release of the consonant. (Bolinger's example is "I'd like to wring your n-n-NECK! [19]) A performer can thus convey effectively the sense of the speaker's holding back his bitterness and allowing just so much of it to escape through his words. At the end of the phrase, the f in face can also be lengthened, and here the feeling is more of spitting out than holding back. The phrase as a whole thus contains a vivid optional performance feature through which a reciter can give pointed sound expression to the speaker's genuine disgust with a world that will not yield to him the woman on whom he thinks his happiness depends.

Though this optional feature, as well as the structural element of forced lip closure mentioned above, is evidence in favor of Andreasen's reading of the poem as an expression of despair, it should be noted that Sheppard's reading does leave room for real emotion, as demonstrated by her comment that the monologue does not constitute "a wholly frivolous complaint" (65); her contention with critics like Andreasen is that they find no evidence at all of exaggeration or wit. Performance analysis has revealed that the first half of stanza two supports a serious reading phonetically as well as lexically, but this serious note is not inconsistent with an overall interpretation of the poem as portraying the

speaker's posturing rather than his unmitigated despair. A reading that finds nothing but high comedy (like Smith's) seems all but untenable for this part of the poem, but the sincerity shown here, while suggestive, of course, of the straightforwardly despairing interpretation, is not inconsistent with a more moderate posturing interpretation.

Furthermore, the second half of the stanza returns to a degree of playfulness with the images of the speaker's being magically transformed into inanimate objects (first the living but immobile mandrake and then the completely inanimate stone fountain), and these images are fittingly introduced by a phrase marked by alliterative liveliness, an apparent phonetic trademark of Donne's: *But that I may not this disgrace/Indure, nor yet leave loving, Love let mee/Some senslesse peece of this place bee* (14-16). The Petrarchan image of the speaker's becoming a weeping fountain is completed in the next stanza by his invitation to other lovers to come and take samples of his tears by which they can measure the tears of their own ladies and so judge the strength of the latter's devotion. And the performance crux of this passage is, like *But O* and *thoroughly be thought*, an intensifier--*just*--whose accenting has the effect of conveying a touch of wit rather than serious pain. By gently emphasizing *just*, a performer can convey the sense that the speaker is making fun of either himself, or the Petrarchan mindset, or both. For a

reading of despair, in contrast, accenting the word makes no particular sense. Insisting emphatically that the tears of the other lovers' mistresses must taste exactly like his own adds nothing to the picture of the speaker as hopelessly despondent; the word might as well be left unaccented, in which case it would be hardly more than a filler syllable. Therefore, assuming that every word contributes to the meaning of the poem, it seems the line should be read as an instance of the speaker's hyperbolic posturing. It is interesting to note that such a reading establishes the return to the first stanza's self-mockery, a return supported by the content as well as the phonological effects; the speaker's elaboration of the weeping fountain image reaches back to the opening line of the poem and his being *surrounded by teares*. When accented properly, *just* can be used to render quite precisely this modulation of the speaker's mood back to the ironic distance with which he opened the poem--a distance effected by the rollicking motion of the first line.

Once the speaker has made this return, the next line of the poem offers the performer a chance to reinforce it with the interjection *alas*. Being an exclamation, *alas* also has an intensifying function and contributes nothing if it receives no accent at all. As with *But O* in the first stanza, we find that *alas* can be sounded either despondently or ironically, and in its immediate

context--unlike that of *But O*--either pronunciation is logically consistent. But given what we have discovered about the greater feasibility of a self-mocking pronunciation of *just*, the most complete use of *alas* seems to be as a reinforcer of the emotion conveyed by the posturing performance of *just*. Since there is no way to accent *just* in a despairing reading, a despairing accenting of *alas* would stand alone, which would make for a permissible but less rich sound reinforcement of meaning. The performer's following up the self-mocking touch on *just* with a similarly self-mocking sounding of *alas* makes for a more complete and complex use of the interjection, a possibility which thereby constitutes evidence for a posturing interpretation.

The poem's final lines contain yet another modulation of the speaker's mood, as the closing couplet evinces a definite bitterness not unlike that of *mock me to my face*.

The two prominent portions of *O perverse sex, where none is true but shee/Who's therefore true, because her truth kills mee* (26-27), the climactic *perverse sex* and *kills mee*, are also phonetically conducive to harsh pronunciations, since both phrases begin with voiceless stops, whose propensity for forceful sounding was discussed in the preceding chapter. Because the two phrases each carry connotations of the hateful and even deadly, the harshness of the stops equips the performer to inject those

emotions into the lines. This bitterness will, like that of *mock me to my face*, accord with either of the readings we are testing; it will be perfectly in line with the despairing reading, and will constitute, as did the earlier phrase, another strain of real feeling in the posturing reading. The overall conclusion that has been developing throughout the analysis remains: the poem's sounds support an interpretation of self-conscious posturing on the part of the speaker, but a posturing that nonetheless stems from, and at times exhibits, genuine emotion.

The analysis has shown how the various structural sound elements and intonational possibilities inherent in the lines of *Twicknam Garden* support the performance of a reading that is precise and coherent despite the several shifts in the speaker's tone. Specifically, it has revealed phonological evidence for the speaker's ironic distance from his pain, which is real pain nonetheless, as the analysis also shows. Sheppeard's idea of the tone as postured but stemming from sincere feeling has been vindicated, though perhaps with the qualification that a more bitter self-mockery be substituted for her characterization of the speaker as still attempting to woo the unattainable woman. The important conclusion is that of the fundamental posturing nature of his stance, as opposed to the claim--made by Andreasen and others--that he exhibits unalloyed despair.

While A. J. Smith's understanding of the poem as pure comic hyperbole has been dismissed as too extreme in its denial of any real pain, the analysis has elaborated his remark that the posturing is "built into the movement" of the poem (51). So far, this study has tried to discover just how such nuances of tone can be built into the words and lines. More broadly, it has tried to demonstrate how performance testing can provide a way of attending to the sound potential of lyric poetry and of considering what interpretive statement that potential might be suggesting. The next chapter will focus on another poem in which the speaker's mood seems to change during the course of his declaration, a poem which, like *Elegy XIX* and the first half of *The Canonization*, takes the form of a dramatic monologue.

End Notes

¹Bolinger labels the gesture a "delayed release" (19), but I avoid that term since it is widely used in linguistics to describe the articulation of affricates, which is an entirely separate phenomenon.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *THE SUNNE RISING*

Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?
Sawcy pedantique wretch, goe chide 5
Late schoole boyes and sowre prentices,
Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
Call countrey ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time. 10

Thy beames, so reverend, and strong
Why shouldst thou thinke?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a winke,
But that I would not lose her sight so long:
If her eyes have not blinded thine, 15
Looke, and to morrow late, tell mee,
Whether both the 'India's of spice and Myne
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee.
Aske for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay. 20

She's all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes doe but play us, compar'd to this,
All honor's mimique; All wealth alchimie;
Thou sunne art halfe as happy 'as wee, 25
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties bee
To warme the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art every where;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare. 30

The Sunne Rising, Donne's lively reworking of the poetic form known as the *aubade*, or song of lovers parting at dawn, has been subject to critical disjunctions of emphasis rather than deep interpretive differences. That is, in this poem perhaps more than any other treated in this study, readers disagree regarding the speaker's mood, but usually not regarding the deeper issue of his very sincerity or insincerity in putting forth his claims. Most

agree that in first berating and later patronizing the sun as disturber of his night of love, the speaker constructs an elaborate fiction that he fully knows to be fiction--yet a fiction not necessarily insincere in its lavish, sometimes otherworldly, praise of the woman who shares his bed. Where they disagree is concerning the mood in which the fiction is constructed. Anna Nardo puts the question succinctly: are we to understand *The Sunne Rising* as a serious assertion of fictive truth expressing "the imaginative power of [the speaker's] passion" or as a comic-ironic case of "a man who is laughing at his own extravagance" (54)?

Nardo's thesis is that the poet frames the speaker's dramatic monologue as play, and thus encompasses both interpretations, since play essentially *is* an activity in which the player both is and is not the thing he or she pretends to be. Other critics, however, have come down on one side or the other of the question. Wilbur Sanders is one of those who finds a serious assertion of fictive truth in the poem, which he views as a heartfelt statement of the universal emotion of timelessness in love; he judges the poem as "an amazingly stable compound of crazy hyperbole and complete sobriety" (74). N. J. C. Andreasen, in contrast, finds a man laughing at his own extravagance when she characterizes the speaker's mood as one of "profane

gaiety" (117) and claims that "wit and ingenuity are more predominant than sexual passion" (117). These two different moods, then--seriousness and gaiety--form the basic dichotomy addressable by performance analysis.

The interpretive situation for *The Sunne Rising*, however, is more complex than this simple dichotomy. Within the group of serious readings, there is another interpretive division which needs to be considered alongside the basic question: the presence or absence of a certain undercurrent of insecurity in the speaker's thought, with regard to his proclaimed superior position in the universe as a lover immune to time. Patricia Garland Pinka notes "the inevitable mutability which the sun symbolizes" (116), while Arnold Stein gives perhaps the most perceptive and complete account of the undercurrent, reading the poem as "binary" in its placing the lovers in a position superior to that of the world yet doing so in terms of that very world rather than describing their position with any type of transcendent imagery. Thus, "the interior world dominates and the issues are resolved in its favor, but [a] formal counterbalance" (*Eloquence* 126) has been imposed by the terms in which that dominance is expressed. Significantly, Stein also notes what many critics seem to ignore, that "the question of time is vigorously raised and quietly dropped" (*Eloquence* 125). This undercurrent of the speaker's awareness of his

precarious cosmic position, whether focused or not on the issue of time, is generally absent from accounts that find his mood gay and exuberant; Andreasen claims that "the annoyed lover dominates the sun throughout" (116), and Clay Hunt, in reading the poem as "the exultant brag of a young lover after a night of love," describes it as a monologue of "youthful exuberance and unclouded high spirits" (92). In readings that find his mood more serious, the undercurrent is sometimes present, as for Stein or Pinka, and sometimes absent, as for Murray Roston, who describes the couplet in which *time* is mentioned (lines 9-10) as a "calmly resonant assertion of love's unchanging splendour" (14) and the entire poem as "affirming the dominion of man in a universe created specifically to serve his needs" (17).

Performance analysis will thus seek to determine two things: whether the speaker is predominantly witty or predominantly serious (though by the content of the piece he is certainly some of each), and (if the latter) whether or not he reveals an awareness of the ultimate frailty of his position in the universe. There will be in effect three performance possibilities: playful (witty), serious and confident (hereafter occasionally shortened to "serious"), and serious and (somewhat) distressed (hereafter referred to as "distressed"). As was the case with *Elegy XIX*, most of the lines of *The Sunne Rising* are,

by virtue of their unambiguous literal meanings, sounded gaily on any interpretation. Questions about the speaker's mood, like the question in *Elegy XIX* of that speaker's gleeful blasphemy or serious heresy, surface only for those few passages whose literal meaning is compatible with either levity or sobriety, and it is these portions which give rise to fruitful phonological analysis.

The first eight lines of the poem constitute a brusque yet jocular complaint against the sun, and will be delivered abrasively yet playfully for any interpretation.

The witty reading will perhaps yield a perkier, and the serious a more annoyed, rendition, but there will probably not be any variations large enough to be isolated and analyzed. The concluding couplet of the stanza, however, brings a new element into the picture: given their surface meaning, these lines can either continue the perky abrasiveness, blithely rejecting as rags the pesky unpleasantries of time, or they can represent a shift in the speaker's attitude, to one of sudden, sobering awareness of the inevitability of his eventual doom, which is presumably what Stein has in mind when he notes the "vigorous" raising of the issue of time.

Interestingly, Donne himself is quoted in the rags entry of the *Oxford English Dictionary* as having used this very phrase in one of his sermons, where he said *First and last are but ragges of time*. This suggests that for Donne

it may have been something of an idiomatic phrase, meaning he would have sounded it as a compound, with the stress on the first word. Such an emphasis on *rags* would seemingly accord best with a serious, confident interpretation, but the supposition, even if valid, does not constitute grounds for inferring that the phrase indicates such a reading. The reason it does not is that with regard to the distressed reading the couplet presents an unusual situation: if worry is present in the poem, it seems to be during the sounding of this sentence that it begins to creep into the speaker's consciousness; indeed, given his feeling of infinitude brought on by love, it may not be until he is in the middle of pronouncing *time* that he realizes his ultimate helplessness in the face of it. In any event, if the mood does shift, it does not do so before line ten, and even if a performer of the distressed interpretation does manage to intone the line or the final word in such a way as to indicate his worry, the subtle emphasis of incipient dread would translate to a performance variation too minute and indistinct to give rise to any conclusive phonological analysis. For practical purposes, then, the performance of the two basic interpretations and of the presence or absence of distress will remain identical throughout the opening stanza. To see the variation at this point in the poem would require peering inside the speakers' minds. For the distressed

speaker, however, it is here, in the spotlighted stanza-final position, that the seed of worry is planted.

Only about midway through the second stanza does that seed have a chance to flourish. In lines 11 through 13 the speaker continues (or returns to) his chiding, and, as in the opening stanza, given the literal meaning there is only one basic way for the lines to be intoned. But the thought is completed by the subordinate clause of line 14, and its sense is more problematic. We can understand *But that I would not lose her sight so long* (14) either as pure comic hyperbole--she is far too beautiful to block out of view even for a fraction of a second--or as the speaker's declaration of serious passion, or as the speaker's abrupt, poignant realization that his newly discovered but heretofore abstractly expressed knowledge of time's power applies to his immediately significant personal situation in a painfully concrete way: since his minutes with her are numbered, he is not willing to forego even one. In the first, or witty, reading the speaker furthers his impudent assertion of superiority over the sun with the brag that he possesses a woman so beautiful; in the second, or serious (and confident), reading, he declares a hypothetical truth in order to express his emotion; in the third, or distressed, reading, his fear of time comes to a head with the recognition that his love affair is under its control.

For any of these readings, *her* will serve as the tone

center of the line since it receives contrastive stress (which automatically overrides the metrical stress on *lose* and *sight*) to distinguish the speaker's view of the woman from his view of the sun. To convey the different interpretations, a performer will vary the already-present accent on the word: the impudent performance--in which the speaker delights in reminding the sun of his treasure and enjoys his own wit thoroughly--is accomplished with a lilt in the voice and, specifically, a strong up-and-down pitch movement on the emphatic *her*. The serious performance likewise emphasizes the word with a pitch turn, most likely again upwards from the baseline, but with a decidedly steadier and less high sounding of the syllable. In addition to these small but significant variations in the two basic interpretations, for an intonationally precise performance of a distressed reading, the pitch will probably turn not upward but downward on *her*, in an expression of the speaker's dejection over the inevitable loss of his beloved. The word is thus an intonational crux for the basic interpretive question, and a sort of barometer for the question of the speaker's distress. As far as the latter reading is concerned, the line is the first opportunity for the emotions begun in response to the *rags of time* to come fully to the surface of the speaker's consciousness and accordingly to be expressed in his

intonation. If distress is present in the poem, it is potentially quite audible in line 14.

But *is* distress present or not? And, prior to that, which of the two basic interpretations is the line more suited to convey? Performance testing reveals a natural pitch jump upward on *her*: the rounded [u] of *lose* preceding the unrounded [] vowel of *her* causes the voice to modulate upward enough to make it considerably easier to sound *her* higher than *lose* rather than the opposite, and still easier to sound *her* not merely higher but quite a bit higher than *lose*. Sounding *her* at a less high pitch in order to add the somberness necessary to convey the serious rather than the playful reading requires a conscious effort to control or temper the natural upward pitch jump that takes place between the two words. Sounding *her* with a pitch downturn, to convey the distressed reading, is even more difficult. This is not to say that sounding the line in such controlled ways cannot be accomplished; it is simply to say that allowing the pitch to jump as high as it wants--so to speak--is the most natural way to perform the line. *Her* thus contains a performance directive, albeit one of limited strength, suggesting a playful reading of the line.

The rest of stanza two is, for the most part, similar to stanza one in that it is inherently jocular and therefore intoned so, no matter which overall

interpretation is being expressed. Lines 15-20 are a masterpiece of fantastical hyperbolic praise of the woman, one of Donne's trademark modifications of the familiar Renaissance trope of lovers as microcosm in which the macrocosm is not reduced to insignificance but instead is contracted and contained within the lovers. In making such a hyperbolic claim, the speaker in any reading will be animated throughout the passage. Within that animated performance, however, there are two subtle but distinguishable points of difference between the conflicting interpretations.

First is *blinded thine*, which, because of the novelty of its idea, receives the most prominent accent in line 15. Phonetically, the internal rhyme in the repetition of the heavy segment cluster--the [aI] diphthong followed by the nasal [n], first as part of the consonant cluster -nd and then standing alone--enable the two words to receive not only this sentence accent but also added stress of some type. With the repetitive effect, they seem quite suited to carrying what has been termed elsewhere an *ironic punch*.¹ To test this punch potential, try pronouncing *blinded thine* with the mischievous mockery the speaker would be expressing in a reading where he is both teasing the sun and laughing at his own extravagance (the witty interpretation), and then try pronouncing it without that comic jab, as in a reading where he is either feeling deep

emotion about his love (the serious reading) or sobered by his newly-discovered awareness of the inevitable loss of his beloved (the distressed reading). Such a test reveals the phrase to be quite capable of giving prosodic precision to a playful reading--by a sarcastic drawing out, not once but twice in quick succession, of the diphthong and the conspicuously resonant nasal consonant--whereas no such precision is possible for other interpretations. Had Donne used a phrase without the repeated strong syllable--say *blinded yours* instead of *blinded thine*--this comic-ironic punch potential would be lost. As it is, we see that although in this case (unlike that of *her* in the preceding line) it is just as easy to pronounce the words without the punch as with it, the sound structure of the line supports a playful performance in a way that it does not support other types of performances. The words thus give rise to an optional performance feature in favor of the witty reading. The performer is free to heed it or not, but the very fact that there is a possibility for enhancing one type of performance constitutes some degree of evidence for that interpretation.

Whether or not a performer chooses to make use of the sound potential of *blinded thine*, the next four lines (16-19) are, like the opening lines of the poem, pure comic hyperbole, and this circumscribed meaning dictates their pronunciation. The final line (20) of this middle stanza,

however, presents a lexically subtler but intonationally stronger version of the situation presented by stanza one's *rags* couplet: the concluding clause *all here in one bed lay* represents a return of the speaker's mind from exaggerated abstract praise to the immediate reality at hand, and the phonetic structure of the phrase provides the possibility of expressing that return to reality as sobering. In this third performance crux of stanza two, the performer of a self-parodying reading can carry the joke through to the end by continuing the lilting intonation of lines 16-19 to the end of the sentence, not allowing the pitch to turn downward on *lay*, as it would naturally do to signal the end of the statement. The performer of a distressed reading, however, can also use this final line to give voice to that speaker's concern. Reciting it with a brief but noticeable pause between *bed* and *lay*, and with a succession of small pitch downturns on the final three monosyllables, will signal the note of apprehension creeping back into the speaker's consciousness. By delivering the lines in this manner, which will constitute slightly more pitch downslide than what is normal for simply signalling the end of a declaration, the performer can convey the return of the speaker's awareness of the precariousness of his hold on the woman after his brief excursion into the fanciful escape of the geographical hyperbole.

While there are no phonetic clues--as were found in *her* and *blinded thine*--favoring one reading over the other, there is the syntactical pull for the pitch downturn signalling the end of the statement, which the performer of a witty reading will have to studiously and awkwardly avoid if he or she is to maintain the playfulness in the face of the refocusing of attention on the immediate situation. A distressed reading, in contrast, calls for an extension of the syntactically mandated downturn, an intonational feat that plays on what is naturally present syntactically, simply moving it further in the same direction rather than working against it as the witty performance must do. Moreover, the slowing down of the phrase caused by the string of monosyllables seems conducive to the prolonged downturns of the distressed reading.² Substituting the non-monosyllabic *all here contented lay for all here in one bed lay* demonstrates the greater ease of sounding the latter than the former with a dejected intonation. The third possibility for the line, an emotionally unmarked performance consistent with a serious but undistressed interpretation and consisting of a sentence-ending pitch downturn but no further elaboration of that device, is perhaps the most natural rendition of all, but of the other two, the structure clearly favors the performance of distress over that of play. This syntactically based performance directive thus opposes the two previously

discovered phonetic clues in the stanza, indicating a serious reading of the poem whereas the previous clues suggested playful readings. Considering this division, along with the impossibility of hearing the incipient distress in *rags of time*, it seems at the end of two stanzas that the poet has purposely crafted the piece so as to leave the speaker's mood phonologically, as well as lexically, indeterminate.

The indeterminateness continues through most of the third and final stanza. The first four lines of the stanza present a thematic situation slightly different from that of stanza two. In the discussion of such entities as *all States*, *all Princes* (21), and *all honour* and *all wealth* (24), the metaphors are as extreme but not as far-fetched, cosmic, and discordant as the geographical conceits of the preceding stanza. States and princes and honor and wealth are human things, making the passage more naturalistic than the one in which the speaker had the anthropomorphized sun viewing the Indias and inquiring about absent kings. While the exaggeration is still comical, the naturalism renders its delivery less necessarily jocular than that of the major part of the second stanza, whose wildly incongruent fancies seem almost silly in comparison. This third stanza opens with a four-line passage that is not forced by its literal meaning to be intoned playfully but seemingly can be performed according to either of the two basic

interpretations we are considering. There are, as usual, crucial portions (which will be examined presently), but this time the remainder of the passage will tend to come across according to the tone they set, whereas the major portions of the other stanzas were inherently jocular, so that if the cruxes were delivered seriously, they were done so in the midst of more playful environments. This fact makes no essential difference in the ensuing analysis, but as a performance feature is worth bearing in mind.

The first crux of this passage opening stanza three (21-24) is line 22, which is automatically spotlighted by its form, a repetition of the unusual three-accent, four-or-five syllable metrical pattern that appears in the same position in stanzas one and two, in lines 2 and 12 respectively. Critics have noted the prosodic power of *Nothing else is*; Sanders, for example, remarks that a "stunned silence . . . follows . . . the short-line pause [which] is masterly" (73). Whether the words be sounded playfully or solemnly, by their very arrangement they command attention. The convergence of metrical spotlighting with the radical claim put forth by the spotlighted words makes for an emotional climax of the poem. The question is, which type of emotion--serious or self-parodying--is the structure most suited to convey?

The initial impression seems to be that the structure is most conducive to a serious reading; the brevity of the

line and the definiteness of the simple declaration seem to indicate the speaker's seriousness. And this impression is borne out by a systematic test performance of the different interpretations. The careful-speech tempo characteristic of poetic performance causes a noticeable pause between the final two monosyllables, and the resulting focus on the climactic *is* can hardly be rendered playfully, due to the brevity of the vowel and the lightness of the entire short vowel-single consonant cluster. For a performance expressive of a witty interpretation, the lexical situation calls for an ironic punch on *is*, but the phonetic structure provides no tools with which a performer can deliver such a punch. The reverse would obtain if the line read *Nothing else exists*: the accented final syllable of the crucial word would consist of a strong three-consonant cluster, enabling a performer to draw it out in sarcastic emphasis expressive of the speaker's self-parody. With the actual structure, though, the measured emphasis on the brief *is* expresses accurately the speaker's seriousness but offers no comparable way to vocalize his laughter. The metrical situation of the line combined with the phonetic makeup of the accented syllable creates a moderately strong expressive structural element that gives the line an innately serious sound.

The other crux occurs two lines later; the phonetic structures of *mimique* and *alchimie* in line 24 are

expressive of aggression, an aggression which can readily be increased if a performer so desires. The cutting voiceless stop ([k]) in both words and the built-in cacophony of *alchimie*--by virtue of the dissimilarity of its syllables--provide the structural violence, whose effect is increased by the repetition of the syntactic construction and which can be enhanced by an exaggerated buildup and forceful release of the initial [m] in *mimique*.

(Relative to the instance of this phenomenon discussed in relation to *mock me to my face* in *Twicknam Garden*, the buildup here will probably be more an exaggeration of pressure rather than duration, but the effect of conveying anger will be the same.) These structural phonetic elements and optional feature of initial consonant buildup certainly suggest a serious interpretation of the poem, although it seems impossible to pinpoint the exact relationship between the speaker's violent attitude toward honor and wealth and his overall seriousness in the poem. The evidence is not as strong as that of *Nothing else is*, but the cutting nature of the sounds in these words, and the potential for increasing the effect in order to enhance a serious rendition, do support a serious rather than a playful interpretation of the poem.

In lines 25-29, the speaker returns to addressing the sun directly, this time in a manner somewhat less abrasive than in the poem's opening lines but perhaps not as

sincerely "mellow" as some critics have found (Pinka 116); Sanders aptly describes the tone as "humorous" and "magnanimous" (74). Performance considerations are not significant for interpretation, for two reasons: first, this is, like the major portions of the other stanzas, an inherently playful passage whose delivery is largely determined by its obvious meaning, and second, since it functions mainly to advance the drama between the speaker and the sun, the speaker's emotions regarding the larger issues at hand are, for the most part, hidden from view.

In the poem's final line, however, the drama modulates back into philosophical musing, and the question of jocularity or seriousness again becomes pertinent. And here also is some relatively strong intonational guidance that suggests a final consideration for answering that question. The exact structural relationship is difficult to pinpoint, but *This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare* (30) seems to favor a solemn rendition phonetically, if not also lexically. Critics differ as to the tone they find in this important line, but most do not base their judgments on sound: Andreasen says simply that the speaker's gaiety "succeeds in making the sun seem tired and impotent" (117), and Roston that the threat of "the insignificance of man in the heliocentric world . . . has been discarded as no more than a foolish joke" (17). Sanders is one of the rare critics who does include the

element of sound in his commentary; he notes, imprecisely but aptly, the "momentary stillness--the only still moment in the whole poem--of that last line" (74). The task for phonological analysis is, then, to try to discover the structural foundation for that stillness, or to discover whatever other tone might emanate instead from the arrangement of the line.

The key phrases *thy center* and *thy spheare*, parallel in both syntactic and phonetic structure, offer the last of the poem's numerous structural repetitions. The virtually identical vowel patterns coax a solemn vocalization whose solemnity is reinforced by the repetition: the [aI] diphthong in *thy* followed by the similar [ɛ] in *center* and [I] in *spheare*³ makes for a tense-to-lax vowel sequence which translates into a similar intonational pattern of pitch downturns on the accented words, thus expressing the somberness the speaker feels at the reminder of either the bed's sacredness to him (the serious reading) or the poignancy of its impermanence and cosmic insignificance (the distressed reading), or both. Syntactic considerations seem to play a role also, with the inverted order of the first clause and the truncated ending of the second, which causes the normal statement-ending pitch downturn to fall on the key word. In any event, it seems all but impossible to intone this line in accordance with a

witty interpretation. Its structure thus constitutes a performance directive pointing away from that reading.

The overall result of performance analysis, then, is a mixture of phonological clues to the speaker's mood in *The Sunne Rising*. Most of the poem is, as has been noted repeatedly, unquestionably witty, and the only two interpretive cruxes in the first half of the piece (*her and blinded thine* in lines 14 and 15, respectively) were found to support a playful rendition of his attitude. In the second half, however, there proved to be twice as many performance cruxes, and all four of them (*one bed lay* (20), *Nothing else is* (22), *mimique* and *alchimie* (24), and *thy center* and *thy spheare* (30), were found to support a serious understanding of his mood. The phonological analysis, then, indicates an interesting progression of seriousness in the speaker's consciousness, perhaps beginning with a touch of undetectable worry in his mention of *time* in line 10, being concealed beneath the merriment of most of stanza two, and first becoming noticeable with the return of his attention to his immediate predicament with *one bed lay* in line 20. Then the final stanza is richest with phrases whose sound effects suggest his seriousness regarding the woman and possibly his distress over mutability. The last serious-sounding phrase is the entire final line, which practically enforces a somber ending to any rendition of the poem. The analysis, then,

has revealed the speaker's progression from gaiety to seriousness as he proceeds through a live dramatic monologue.

In light of this complexity, the convoluted critical debate and the apparent ambiguity within many individual critics' minds regarding the meaning of *The Sunne Rising* are not surprising. This analysis has, it seems, uncovered a phonological dimension to the noted Donnean ambiguity. While for some apparently ambiguous poems, such as, say, *The Canonization*, performance testing can clarify critical debates and suggest preferred interpretations, for *The Sunne Rising* the final decision must be that there is no simple answer, no pinning down of the poem to any interpretive framework. Perhaps Nardo's understanding of the doubleness of play applies to *The Sunne Rising* at its most intricate level: not only the speaker's words but also the sounds of those words show he both does and does not genuinely feel he is all *Princes*, immune to the rags of time and secure in his bed of love wherein all [*kings*] lay.

End Notes

¹*Ironical punch* was defined in Chapter Four as "the aggressive vocal jab that is commonly audible when the mischievousness or derisiveness or bitterness any performer is feeling spills over into--or is purposely injected into--his or her voice."

²Though this statement may seem contradictory to the claim made in Chapter Four regarding the string of monosyllables

in *Elegy XIX*, which were held to be conducive to an impudent reading, this seems to be one of the many prosodic features that Tsur terms *double-edged*. That the slower tempo of *To enter in these bonds is to be free* better facilitates mockery in the *Elegy* whereas the slower tempo here better facilitates seriousness seems to me to be self-evident and a function of a complex of factors.

³It is possible that for Donne the vowels in the stressed syllable of *center* and in *spheare* were not merely similar, but identical. Dobson finds that "certain lists [i.e., of the contemporary orthoepists on whom his study is based] seem to show [ɛ] . . . in . . . *sphere*" (731).

CHAPTER EIGHT: METRICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS
STRUCTURAL INTERPRETIVE EVIDENCE IN *THE EXTASIE*

NOTE: Although this poem is not usually printed with quatrain divisions, I have not only made those divisions but also numbered the quatrains, in an effort to assist my reader. The quatrain numbers are enclosed in parentheses and placed to the left of the first lines; the numbers on the right-hand side are the line numbers.

- (1) Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest
The violets reclining head,
Sat we two, one anothers best.
- (2) Our hands were firmly cimented 5
With a fast balme, which thence did spring,
Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred
Our eyes, upon one double string,
- (3) So to'entergraft our hands, as yet 10
Was all the meanes to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.
- (4) As 'twixt two equall Armies, Fate
Suspends uncertaine victorie,
Our soules, (which to advance their state, 15
Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee.
- (5) And whilst our soules negotiate there,
Wee like sepulchrall statues lay,
All day, the same our postures were,
And wee said nothing, all the day. 20
- (6) If any, so by love refin'd,
That he soules language understood,
And by good love were grown all minde,
Within convenient distance stood,
- (7) He (though he knowes not which soul spake, 25
Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take,
And part farre purer then he came.
- (8) This Extasie doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love, 30
Wee see by this, it was not sexe
Wee see, we saw not what did move:
- (9) But as all severall soules containe
Mixture of things, they know not what,

- 138
- 35
- Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
And makes both one, each this and that.
- (10) A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size,
(All which before was poore, and scant,) 40
Redoubles still, and multiplies.
- (11) When love, with one another so
Interinanimates two soules,
That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
Defects of loneliness controules.
- (12) Wee then, who are this new soule, know, 45
Of what we are compos'd, and made,
For th'Atomies of which we grow,
Are soules, whom no change can invade.
- (13) But O alas, so long, so farre,
Our bodies, why doe wee forbear? 50
They are ours, though not wee, Wee are
The intelligences, they the spheares.
- (14) We owe them thanks, because they thus,
Did us, to us, at first convay.
Yeelded their senses force to us, 55
Nor are drosse to us, but allay.
- (15) On man heavens influence workes not so,
But that it first imprints the ayre,
For soule into the soule may flow,
Though it to body first repaire. 60
- (16) As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like soules as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man:
- (17) So must pure lovers soules descend 65
T'affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies.
- (18) To'our bodies turne wee then, that so
Weake men on love reveal'd may looke; 70
Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
But yet the body is his booke.
- (19) And if some lover, such as wee,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still marke us, he shall see 75
Small change, when we'are to bodies gone.

Both Helen Gardner and David Novarr, relatively recent commentators on *The Extasie*, attempt to circumvent the long-running critical debate concerning the poem's tone. That debate, as Gardner explains, forms a simple dichotomy: those who view the poem as a sincere expression of the speaker's--and possibly, though it is irrelevant, the poet's--"philosophy of love" and those who view it as a "quasi-dramatic piece of special pleading" (239) with which the speaker aims to seduce his lady friend. (The second category includes all types of ironic readings, not just the seduction reading, though that is the simplest and possibly the most prevalent.) Gardner purports to do away with the dichotomy by claiming that persuasion is not the point of the poem and therefore the possibility of underhanded persuasion by ironic philosophical argument in the service of seduction is not an issue. Novarr likewise focuses on the idea of persuasion, but with a very different result: he claims that within the dramatic situation established by the poem, rational argument designed to convince the hypothetical neoplatonic observer of the lovers is precisely the point and therefore it is simply irrelevant to ask whether Donne the poet was "sincere" when he made the speaker uphold such views. Both these critics recognize an obvious point that may escape casual notice: the poem itself cannot be a seduction,

though it may well be a narrative about a seduction that has supposedly occurred in the past, and though it is, as Novarr states, "concerned about making a case for physical love" (238). But neither he nor Gardner has succeeded in dissolving the dichotomy. The question remains: is the speaker sincere in his claims about the spiritual love that precedes, transcends, and justifies by association the physical, or do those claims constitute the ironic basis of an "intentionally sophisticated" (Gardner 242) argument he has put forth to the woman in an attempt to deceive her into submission to a purely physical involvement?

Though both Gardner and Novarr sidestep the question of sincerity, both of their readings are essentially ways of preserving the poet's seriousness--Gardner by maintaining that the speaker's purpose is description rather than seduction, Novarr by focusing on the speaker's argument with the imaginary listener--and both readings therefore fall into the "sincere" camp--Gardner's serious philosophy of love--as opposed to that of, say, Wilbur Sanders, who sees the piece as a typical masterwork of a supreme ironist. Interpretations falling into the serious category abound, and include, in addition to those of Gardner, Novarr, and Helen Brooks (whose analysis will be examined in detail below), the reactions of poet-critics such as Coleridge and Ezra Pound ("Platonism believed"), Donne's early editor Grierson, and early critic G. R.

Potter, who registered perhaps the serious side's first formal entry in the debate with his "*Donne's Extasie, Contra Legouis*" in 1936. That piece was directed against Pierre Legouis, who dared to introduce the ironic reading in his 1928 *Donne the Craftsman*. Later ironic readings include those of modern commentators Sanders, Frank Kermode, and A. J. Smith, among many others. Sanders sees the poem as a "gigantic burlesque . . . of the neo-platonic dichotomising" (102) that is revealed when we consider the speaker's language as well as the surface argument he constructs; Kermode calls it a "tissue of fallacies [which] sounds solemnly convincing and consecutive, so that it is surprising to find it ending with an immodest proposal" (1971, 122). Smith claims the piece is a "witty" (375) compendium of various 16th-century Italian theories of love, but cannot itself be taken seriously as a philosophical statement because of its overt inconsistencies or as a personal introspection because of its lack of feeling and original contribution.

Since there is so much diversity among the various interpretations, it will be useful to examine in some detail a particular serious reading and a particular ironic reading as a prelude to setting up the actual task of phonological analysis. For this purpose I have selected Brooks and Sanders, because I believe their readings to be the most comprehensive statements of the respective

positions. Furthermore, both are fairly recent commentators: Sanders' book appeared in 1971--just one year before Novarr's article--and Brooks' article in the 1988 *John Donne Journal* is perhaps the very latest interpretive piece on *The Extasie*.

Brooks' piece, which acknowledges the debate in passing, takes the poem completely straightforwardly without excuses or qualifications, demonstrating not only that it can be read as a coherent, logically consistent whole but also that if we take everything the speaker says at face value, the poem necessarily does form such a whole, with even the previously questioned parts falling right into place. For example, the joined souls tell us point blank of the need for the physical relationship symbolized by the pregnant bank and the violet in the opening lines: the sensuality is precisely what gave rise to the original ecstasy--it *did us to us at first convey*--and it will again accompany the spiritual love as the sensory expression of that love, as love's book. When the whole poem is read straightforwardly, there is no difficulty with the sensual imagery; in fact, for consistency's sake it must be present.

Several of Brooks' specific claims seem at least indirectly pertinent to the present inquiry. One of these is that the joint soul of the quoted passage is still speaking when the poem opens, and therefore the scene is

not merely a memory of the male as a single speaker having returned to his ordinary, unsanctified state but rather the recollection by the joint soul--which happens at this moment to be speaking through the person of the male--of its formation which occurred during the ecstasy. Another is that the poem's dramatic monologue is not confined to line 29-onward, as most readers would have it, but rather can be understood fruitfully as encompassing the whole poem, with the reader as the silent interlocutor required by the dramatic monologue form. Finally, Brooks notes the poem's linguistic theme, connecting soul's language, the dialogue of one, and love's book, which is both the text of the love to be revealed to weak men and an analogue of the poem itself. Disappointingly, though, given this apparent interest in speech and language, she does not address the issues of sound, metrics, intonation, or even the speaker's tone in the ordinary sense of diction and syntax.

On the opposite side of the dichotomy, Sanders is one of those critics who understand the poem ironically, only he differs from most of them in that he does not view it as a seduction or recounting of a seduction; in fact, he remarks that such a view "implies some rather queer notions of female psychology; reading 'The Extasie' aloud would not seem likely, on the face of it, to have any markedly aphrodisiac effects" (99). For Sanders, the irony is rather that the speaker is making fun of the whole

immemorial debate concerning the roles of the body and soul in human love. Sanders believes the speaker is purposely making a flimsy philosophical argument to demonstrate the nonsense of attempting to justify what needs no justification because it is inescapable: the claim of the body in love. Though he feels Donne refrains from and has the speaker refrain from making a definite pronouncement regarding the body-soul debate, Sanders finds much evidence to support his ironic reading, and suggests that if we as readers fail to see that the speaker's attitude--whatever his final opinion may be--is fundamentally sarcastic, with quite a bit of ironic distance from his pronouncements, this failure is due to our "lack [of] the ironic stamina to see it through all seventy-six lines" (102). Sanders notes the sexual puns throughout, and finds the poem's ending "defiant" (104) in its "affectation of undergoing this shameful metamorphosis self-sacrificially" in order to "conceal . . . the mesalliance of the soul with the inferior body" (104). The irony, then, lies in the speaker's elaborate yet consciously inadequate construction of the philosophical underpinning of the soul's "conceding to the body what it is in no position ever to withhold" (102); in being thus ironic, the speaker is poking gentle fun at the neoplatonists--who have "growne all minde"--and others who take such arguments seriously.

Unlike Brooks, Sanders offers some hints as to what might be the role of the poem's phonological effects in conveying his speaker's attitude, but unfortunately, those hints are brief and unelaborated. He refers frequently to the "tone" of the poem but is--as are most critics when they use that term--usually talking about things like diction and syntax rather than the intonational possibilities or other sound elements. He does mention at the outset that this tone is generally "level," "unemotive," "dry," and "colourless" (96), and then goes on to offer two intriguing particular comments, first that the singsong rhythm of *We see, we saw not what did move* (and presumably of other similar lines) indicates someone is being swayed, and second that the pleasing sounds in the final quatrain function to spotlight the "barren triumph" of the poem's ending (104). As is the case for Brooks, the details of a precise performance of Sanders' reading will be explored in the course of the phonological analysis to which I now turn.

The first consideration of such an analysis must necessarily be the poem's overwhelming metrical regularity. Fully 51 of the 76 lines are perfect iambic tetrameter, with a high proportion of strong (even) metrical positions occupied by isolated lexically stressed syllables, or, in the terminology of modern generative metrics, *stress maxima*.¹ The power of the strong meter is augmented by the

short, 4-beat lines in their 4x4 quatrain arrangement--as opposed to the more common 5-beat (pentameter) pattern--a phenomenon examined incisively by Derek Attridge in his influential *The Rhythms of English Poetry* and interpreted perceptively by Reuven Tsur in his article "Contrast, Ambiguity, and Double-edgedness." The resultant potentially overpowering rhythm is a structural element automatically present in any performance of the poem, and overshadows if not obliterates other performance choices; therefore, it must necessarily take precedence in any examination of the functioning of the poem's sounds. In thus focusing on an inescapable structural element rather than on optional performance features, the method of analyzing *The Extasie* will differ from that employed for the other poems in this study.

The almost obtrusive metricality has two basic functions with regard to meaning: a general rhythmic function, in which the sound imparted by the meter contributes to the reader's or listener's overall impression of the poem's sense, and a specific semantic function, in which particular words and phrases are metrically highlighted or their various meanings enhanced by appropriate interruptions of the foot pattern. Whatever else he or she may be trying to accomplish by a vocal performance, a performer of such a structurally controlled

poem as *The Extasie* cannot help but produce, to some degree, both of these features.

The precise nature of the general rhythmic effect, and therefore the implications for interpretation, are difficult to ascertain. While Attridge and Tsur concur that 4-beat rhythm, especially when found in 4-line sets as it is in *The Extasie*, is intrinsically more powerful than the 5-beat (pentameter) which is more common in serious poetry (as opposed to ballads and nursery rhymes, where four-beat predominates), only Tsur attempts to discuss what meaning might be imparted by any strongly shaped regular verse, which would be all the more intense with the shorter lines. And his answer, which gives rise to the title of his article, is indefinite; he labels as "double-edged" the effect of heightened contrast between strong and weak metrical positions. He explains that regular meter can provide either a highly rational feeling of certainty--as in Pope's 5-beat couplets--or a purely emotional appeal to the primitive within us, as in the drumbeat of Blake's 4-beat *The Tyger*. He also uses the latter poem, together with its companion piece *The Lamb*, to illustrate a further case of the double-edgedness: the opposition between the complex, menacing effect of the rhythm in the "experienced" *Tyger* and the simple, nursery-rhyme effect of the same rhythm in the "innocent" *Lamb*. The conclusion to be drawn is that the perceived effect of *The Extasie's* strong

four-beat rhythm will depend on its interaction--in Tsur's terminology, its combinational potential--with other aspects of the poem and with the basic interpretation given to the poem as a whole. To put it differently, the rhythm will combine with the other elements to create whatever basic poetic effect occurs in the ear of the reader or listener. The double-edged quality of this metrical regularity means that although it imparts an important quality to performance, it cannot, when considered independently, yield evidence for the interpretive investigation.²

Happily, the specific instances of deviation from this regular meter are a different story entirely. What happens here is that once the abstract metrical pattern has been established and is therefore expected by listeners to continue, then any failure of a line of verse to actualize the four-beat weak-strong alternation with corresponding pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables will interrupt the rhythm and thereby call attention to itself. As a result of the deviation--which creates what is known in both traditional and contemporary metrics as *metrical tension*³--the line may speed up, it may slow down, or it may simply be thrown lopsided; the important thing is that there will be some type of stumble in its recitation, in Judith Page's words, some "pleasurable tension or impulse of surprise" (283). The irregular material is thus

highlighted by this metrical foregrounding. Examining the poem to see which words and phrases are highlighted in this manner will therefore yield interpretive evidence of the structural variety, since the deviations are necessarily present in every possible performance actualization, but evidence of a more definite nature than that of the basic 4x4 rhythm.

Although other phonological features will be considered when, in the environment of the dominating meter, they remain prominent enough to warrant attention, the structural evidence of the highlighted deviations--as opposed to optional performance features emphasized in the analyses of other poems--will be the primary phonological evidence available for *The Extasie*. The meanings attached to the various types of deviations will be straightforward.

Since the speaker's ostensible claim is that the soul is primary in love, being required for love's very existence, yet the body is necessary for the expression of that love, then highlighting of words and phrases that signify serious, deep, spiritual ideas will be taken to indicate a straightforward interpretation of the poem, since it shows metrically the ascendancy of the spiritual over the physical. On the other hand, highlighting of sexually suggestive words and phrases will indicate an ironic interpretation, the extra emphasis hinting that the speaker's priorities may not be quite what he claims.

While these simple relationships comprise the basic interpretive framework, the reality will in many cases be considerably more complex. The chief complicating factor will be that for an ironic interpretation the serious words may receive foregrounding emphasis if the performer renders the emphasis sarcastically, and unless there happens to be other phonetic evidence bearing on that possibility, there will be no way of knowing which type of emphasis--sincere or sarcastic--is indicated. We must therefore bear this in mind as we study each quatrain individually, and venture our metrically-determined verdicts carefully as we progress.

Such a four-line format for the investigation is prescribed by the poem's rhyme scheme. Though modern editors differ as to whether it is meant to be divided into stanzas,⁴ it nevertheless consists of 19 almost perfectly rhyming quatrains, so that a study of the sound possibilities will be most effectively conducted by considering each quatrain as a unit separate from its neighbors, though potentially related to them in sound as well as in meaning. The procedure, then, will be to examine one quatrain at a time, occasionally seeking optional performance evidence by test-performing differing renditions of the basic sincere and ironic readings as exemplified by Brooks and Sanders, but primarily considering the metrically controlled points of

emphasis in an effort to shed some light on which meaning these built-in sound features indicate.

The opening quatrain contains two instances of words or phrases falling in metrically irregular positions: *Where* and *Sat* we two, one another's best. (In the latter case, the second part of the line is regular, but since nearly half the line is taken up by the irregular *sat* we two, the entire line is thrown into metrical disarray.) And these points of metrical foregrounding represent opposite interpretive tendencies; the brief but conspicuously initial *where* throws attention to the locale, which is, as many critics have noted, described in notoriously sensual terms--thus favoring an ironic interpretation of the speaker's intentions--while the *Sat* we two line focuses instead on the relatively innocent fact of the lovers' togetherness, suggesting the speaker's sincerity in extolling a love not primarily sexual. For the present interpretive purpose, then, the cumulative metrical effect is ambiguous.

Other sound effects in the quatrain, however, clearly favor an ironic reading. The alliterated [p] sounds emphasize the most suggestive words in the passage (*pillow* and *Pregnant*), adding to their natural metrical stress enough power to make them potentially as noticeable as the irregular words. And the accented first syllable of *violets*, phonetically heavy with its diphthong--and, like

the first syllables of *pillow* and *Pregnant*, a stress maximum in a strong metrical position--invites the performer to put similar energy into its production, thereby calling attention to the fertilly symbolic *violets*. For an ironic reading, a performer could utilize these various bits of phonetic potential to focus the attention--perhaps gleefully--on the sexual words, thus suggesting to his listeners that what the speaker is about to say regarding the primacy of the soul in love can be taken with a grain of salt. Since these optional performance features clearly favor the ironic interpretation, whereas the structural metrical highlighting is divided between ironic and sincere emphasis, it seems the cumulative phonological evidence for the first quatrain points to an ironic interpretation of the poem. For a serious interpretation, in contrast, the performer might even have to make an effort to downplay the sexual words' natural emphasis in order to maintain the soberer tenor of his argument. Therefore, from a phonological standpoint, quatrain one leans toward an ironic interpretation.

The feature of metrically foregrounded words, which in the opening quatrain proved interpretively less crucial than the performance possibilities found in the metrically regular portions, is precisely the feature that holds the key to the meaning of the second quatrain. That key is the

single word *cimented*, which presumably would qualify as one of what C. A. Patrides in his frustratingly brief discussion of the poem labels "metrically significant words" (30), since it both stretches across a foot boundary and violates the meter. The middle syllable, whose phonetic structure of a simple vowel followed by two consonants qualifies it as heavy,⁵ commits the gravest of all metrical violations: a stress maximum in a weak position. The resulting prominence constitutes structural emphasis on the hyperbolic metaphorical application of *cimented*; the metaphor is completed in the next line by the similarly irregular and thus also foregrounded *fast balme*.

This metrical spotlighting of the already hyperbolic double metaphor underscores the extremely sensual nature of the lovers' supposedly nonsexual union, especially since the merely general exaggeration of the first part of the metaphor is completed by the image of perspiring palms, an indicator of sexual arousal. Since the two phrases carry the main accent of the four lines, and since the intrinsically hyperbolic nature of the sexual metaphor implies insincerity regarding the primacy of the soul in love, the quatrain seems structured in accordance with the ironic reading of the poem. A performance of such a reading would quite appropriately and easily add still further emphasis to the phrases, while a serious one--insofar as such is possible, given the structural

elements suggesting the contrary--would avoid such enrichment, rendering the stanza poetically uneventful. The interpretive difference is not much greater than that in the preceding quatrain, but it does favor the ironic reading.

Similarly and interestingly, the third quatrain also contains two metrically significant words, and their intimation is likewise sexual. *Entergraft* in line ten and *propagation* in line twelve work in different ways to call attention to themselves. Line ten, because of the conjoined *to'entergraft*, may initially appear to fit the established tetrameter pattern, with the compound syllable *to'en-* serving as the accented portion of the initial iambic foot, but the sense of *so* requires that it receive emphatic accent, since it refers to the information on the lovers' anatomical connection from the preceding quatrain. Therefore, *so* receives the first beat of the line, as if to open the line with the traditionally permissible trochaic inversion; since the line has an odd number of syllables (nine), however, and the regular iambic rhythm is resumed immediately with *to'EN*, the result is rather a headless five-beat line whose effect is to spotlight the double-stressed, double-foot *ENterGRAFT* and the fifth foot as *YET*, foregrounded because metrically gratuitous for this poem. The effect of the latter highlighting is that the speaker seems to have added it as a quick afterthought too

important not to be vocalized; since he had finished the line already (according to the established pattern for the poem), he tacked it on to the end, making it more noticeable than it would perhaps have been otherwise.

Propagation, on the other hand, occurs in a line that is a syllable short if the word is pronounced with four syllables; it seems, however, to be one of those multisyllabic words in which secondary and tertiary stresses were sometimes retained,⁶ especially in poetic performance, allowing the possibility of its being pronounced with five syllables, with secondary stresses on both the first and the last syllables. Either it carries the last two beats of a short three-beat line (when pronounced with four syllables), or it carries three beats in a single word (when pronounced with five syllables). Although it is impossible to ascertain which pronunciation Donne intended, in either case the word is metrically significant and therefore highlighted. Since the addition of *as yet* to line nine serves to warn the reader or listener that, in a sexual sense, more is to come, and since *propagation* is a directly sexual word, it seems that for the second quatrain in succession, Donne has crafted the passage's most sensual words into "impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement" (WW, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, qtd. by Page 282), as

Wordsworth described the poetic effect of carefully chosen violations of established metrical patterns.

Quatrains four through seven, with the minor exceptions of out in line 16, *soules* in 22, and *He* in 25, are highly regular and on the present scheme do not reward detailed metrical analysis. The eighth quatrain is also largely regular, to the point of possessing the singsong rhythm Sanders cites as evidence that "somebody is being guyed" (101), but in its final line the emphatically stressed *not* (32), occurring as it does in a weak metrical position, causes the first noticeable break in the rhythm in twenty lines. What, then, is the general effect of this extensive regularity? This general function of the regularity in contributing to the mood for the perception of the poem as a whole is a phenomenon separate from the particular devices of the deviations, which are dependent on the regularity for their effectiveness as foregrounding features but which offer specific interpretive evidence while the overall regularity offers only the mood-setting function. Moreover, it was noted earlier that Tsur has studied the phenomenon and found it to possess a double-edged quality, its combinational potential depending on other factors, including the basic interpretation for the poem arrived at by other means. Since the present portion (quatrains five through eight) is the longest stretch of perfectly regular lines in the poem, this seems

to be an appropriate time to consider the general effect of the regular rhythm.

In these five quatrains and in the poem as a whole, then, Tsur's commentary on double-edgedness seems quite applicable. It seems the regular cadence can fit, in different ways, both ironic and sincere interpretations of *The Extasie*. When we consider that the purpose of the passage is for the speaker to establish his double claim--the nonparticipation of the lovers' bodies in the original ecstasy and their having surpassed in the wisdom of love even the hypothetical neoplatonic observer--it becomes clear that in an ironic interpretation the speaker may be mocking both the idea of sexless love and the presumption of telling others how to love. To speak of the meter using Tsur's model, the combinational potential of the regular 4x4 rhythm would mean that in such a poetic context (an ironic interpretation) the rhythm would be perceived as singsong, perky, and pat, with the speaker undermining his claims by couching them in an inappropriate rhythm, thereby ridiculing the prospect of pat answers that attempt to deny the claims of the body in love. Moreover, the ill fit of the singsong cadence with the sophisticated diction and elevated thought of the passage can itself be seen as a way of calling attention to the irony, or at least raising our suspicions: why does a poem about so lofty a subject as the communion of souls sound like a

nursery rhyme? The basic metrical structure is thus suited quite satisfactorily for an ironic interpretation, though there is nothing about the poem that dictates any necessary connection between the two.

For a sincere interpretation, on the other hand, there are two possibilities for the perception of the rhythmic effect: coolly rational or primitively emotional, though not both, since the terms are mutually exclusive. Here, however, there are two qualifications to take into account. First, the singsong jauntiness we have just examined as the manner of an ironic performance is the more common or more readily received impression of the 4x4 rhythm. Second, although the poem contains both rational and emotional elements, it seems when taken at face value to be too emotional for a purely rational reading and too rational for a purely emotional reading; this means rhythmic support for either reading seems just a bit hard to perceive. Since these are the two possibilities for the meter's function in a straightforward interpretation, it seems on that count difficult to accept either, indicating the metrical structure to be slightly less compatible with a straightforward interpretation than with an ironic one. A straightforward reading can make some sense of the regularity, however. The existence of all these possibilities may make for a case of what Tsur terms "ambiguity," whereby he designates rhythmic elements that

can be simultaneously perceived in contradictory ways. In any case, the metrical regularity is, as a fundamentally double-edged poetic device, inconclusive for an interpretive decision.

The deviations from that regularity return in the ninth quatrain, where *mixture* and *love* are line-initial irregularities whose predominant effect is to draw out *love* by means of the convergence of several factors: monosyllabic lexical stress, emphatic sentence accent, and syntactical isolation represented by a comma and heard as a pause. The result is that *love*, as the key word of the stanza, is given maximal emphasis. From the standpoint of structural sound analysis, however, the precise sense of that emphasis is indeterminate. There is simply nothing about the word's meaning, phonetic structure, or metrical situation that favors either an ironic or a serious interpretation. Though it could be argued that "love" means just what it says and therefore this highlighting of it is an instance of metrical guidance in the direction of a serious reading, the fact is that when we consider it in the context of the whole poem, the metrical evidence we have found before this stanza tips the balance toward at least the plausibility of the speaker's poking fun at the whole idea by uttering *love* sarcastically. This is not to say a decision has been reached in favor of the ironic reading; it is merely to say that at this point, even if

the foregrounding of love is viewed as seriously intended, that bit of evidence for the sincere interpretation is not enough to sway the cumulative case in that direction. The decision must be delayed until farther along in the poem. Furthermore, it may be that the best way to understand the emphasis on love is thematically, as though Donne is simply having his speaker make a metrical nod toward the fundamental subject of the poem.

The metrically foregrounded words in quatrains ten through twelve also represent the themes of their respective passages. The effect of emphasizing them is different from and more general than that of emphasizing the sensual words in the opening quatrains; there, the highlighting pointed to a specific reading of the poem, in that case a sexual, ironic reading. Here, neither interpretation is really favored, because *transplant* (37), *Interinanimates* (42), and *no change* (48) merely signal the subjects of their quatrains. While it could be argued that *transplant* symbolizes the culmination of the sexual possibilities introduced in the first quatrain, the other two words are interpretively neutral. *Interinanimates*, Patrides' chosen example of Donne's metrically significant word choice, may, chiefly by virtue of its exaggerated length and internal repetition, be pronounced so as to mock the elevated diction, but since it can also be intoned with genuine reverence, it offers no evidence one way or the

other. The significance of emphasizing *no change* lies in the way it suggests a finality which is immediately undercut by the speaker's initiation of an argument precisely for change: a return from the ecstatic, sexless union of unchangeable souls to the physical union of the mutable bodies, which will serve as love's book in revealing its truths to humankind. The reversal is logically consistent, and is not itself a question for performance analysis. But the structural highlighting of *no change* makes for the speaker's perhaps unconscious expression of his overeagerness to insist on the finality which will be undercut in the very next line, and in doing so suggests an ironic interpretation, in which the speaker is in fact immediately contradicting himself, rather than only seeming to do so, which a serious interpretation would have to hold.

This abrupt shift to the physical in the thirteenth quatrain constitutes the most radical change of "tone" in the poem; the passage beginning *But O alas, so long, so farre* has been frequently noticed by commentators, who seem, whatever their interpretive persuasion, to agree that here, if nowhere else in the poem, the speaker reveals his true feelings. Novarr considers the quatrain the only place in the poem containing any emotion, and Sanders calls it "the first solid sentiment that presents itself" (101). What these two opposed interpreters agree about is the

direct presentation of that case for physical love which, as we saw above, even believing readers like Novarr admit is the speaker's chief argumentative purpose in the poem. Where they differ is the attitude they find the speaker exhibits toward his argument: Novarr and other serious readers feel he is sincere in his implicit claim that up until this point the lovers have been solely concerned with the ecstatic union of their souls, and now when they turn their attention to physical matters, the souls will continue to occupy a more exalted position, with the bodily activity undertaken primarily for the sake of "revealing" the spiritual love. Ironical interpreters, in contrast, think the whole business about the ecstasy has been a sham designed to justify the case for physical love on the false grounds that it represents something deeper. These opposite understandings of the speaker's attitude will be expressed in conflicting performances of this thirteenth quatrain, especially the first line; the manner in which the speaker is made to intone *But O alas, so long, so farre* (49) will hold the key to the sincerity or irony of the interpretation being conveyed.

The phonological characteristics of this crucial line differ from those of most of the cruxes we have examined thus far, in that metrics plays no part in the interpretation of this completely regular iambic line. Other performance considerations, however, seem less

overshadowed by the regularity than they are in the rest of the poem. The lexical meaning of the interjectional *But O alas* leans rather heavily in the direction of irony, since *alas* introduces the all-but-fatuous idea of the speaker's feeling grief or sorrow--rather than simple sexual frustration--over the prospect of abstinence. Furthermore, the rest of the line (*so long, so farre*) focuses on the torturousness of that abstinence--meaning that for a straightforward performance, which, in light of what the speaker has just been saying regarding ecstasies and souls, would avoid having him ridicule the concept of abstinence, the entire line needs to be downplayed intonationally. To accomplish this, the performer will need either to sound the line (awkwardly) with no peak accent or to give *alas*, as the most emotion-laden word in the line, the main accent, but only very lightly so, and with virtually no accent in the rest of the line. An ironic performance, in contrast, would take full advantage of the potential for intensifying every word of the line (save the opening conjunction), since each one is a component of the emphatic adverb phrase; it would be as though the whole line were the location of one extended ironic punch. Test-performing such an interpretation reveals several phonological features that equip a performer to actualize this potential.

In the first foot, the most purely exclamatory word in the line handily carries, with its diphthong [oU], the resounding emphatic accent as well as the structural feature of metrical stress; the situation is highly similar to that of the same phrase in *Twicknam Garden*, *But O, selfe traytor*. The iambic movement from the unstressed *But* to the *O* is echoed by the next foot's *alas*, creating a swinging rhythm in which momentum accumulates on the stressed *-las*, facilitating the line's second instance of emphatic accent. The two feet that compose the second half of the line similarly have identical metrical structures. The emphatic accent on each occurrence of *so* (as well as on *long* and *farre*) evens out the contrast between the weak and strong positions of these feet, reducing the swinging effect, but however the performer chooses to distribute the exact weight of the accents, they will naturally be distributed identically or almost identically in each of the two feet. Add to this repetition of rhythmic pattern the repetition of *so*, and the result is a concentration of related optional performance features expressive of whatever amount of irony the performer desires to convey. The line that has drawn so much critical attention for its tone thus proves to be phonologically as well as lexically indicative of an ironic interpretation of the poem.

What, though, of the remainder of the quatrain? *They are ours* (51) is metrically foregrounded, and the quiet

possessiveness expressed thereby seems a subtle, almost subliminal, way of arguing that the "I" (not necessarily the soul *per se*, but the consciousness behind the speaking voice) has inherent rights to do what it wants with the body--an idea logically consistent with but slightly incongruent to the ostensible theme of the poem, the primacy in love of purely spiritual union. In focusing his reader-listener's attention on the phrase, Donne has used his metrical cleverness to undercut his speaker's conscious intent. Opening as it does the sentence immediately following *But O alas*, the irregularity of *They are ours* constitutes another clue for the ironic interpretation of the quatrain. And in the next line there is still further evidence: the multisyllabic, metrically unstable *intelligences* (52) also jars the rhythm and calls attention to itself. The use of this word places the mind-body relation in the same cosmic category as that of the angels' governance of the spheres: spiritual, celestial, divinely ordained. Unless the word is delivered sarcastically, the structural emphasis on it at least buffers any momentary impression of irony occasioned by *They are ours*, making the latter half of the quatrain at least consistent with a serious interpretation of the poem. Cumulatively, then, the phonological evidence in quatrain thirteen, mixed in category (structural and performative) and type (metrical

and phonetic), indicates a mixed verdict for the question of sincerity or irony.

Following the final two lines of the quatrain, which are so irregular that if they stood alone the metric pattern would be indiscernible, the opening lines (53-54) of the next quatrain are perfectly regular, thus forcefully re-establishing the meter. The heavy internal rhyme (*they thus,/ did us, to us*) makes for one of the most dominantly singsong constructions in the poem; whatever the jaunty cadence implies, that implication will be strongest here. Rough spots reappear in the second half of the quatrain, with *Yielded* at the beginning of line 55; more than one commentator has noted its sexual connotations, which suggest an attitude of conquest on the part of the speaking consciousness similar to the possessiveness of *they are ours* four lines earlier. The logical situation is also identical: the bodies' giving way to the spirits' rule is consistent with the surface intent of the argument, but the connotations suggest less than noble estimations of the spirits' intentions. Perhaps the line would be an example of what Patrides has in mind when he says the syntax and diction of *The Extasie* work to "qualify the nominal argument" (30). As our investigation of structural elements has disclosed, the poem's metrics can be added to the list of qualifying features--and *Yielded* then seems one

place where all three such devices converge in a single word to suggest an ironic interpretation of the poem.

The next line (56), containing the final clause of the sentence, is also irregular, but the interpretive implications of its irregularity are harder to determine. The exact metrical realization of the line is open to debate, but the details can be left unspecified since the foregrounding effect is quite clear: an extra strong accent falls on the irregular stress maximum *drosse*, with a secondary accent on the perfectly metrical *allay*. What is significant here is that the more strongly spotlighted *drosse* is the negative term of the *Nor . . . but* clause, while the positive term *allay* is relegated to the secondary accentual position. The perceived effect of this focusing more attention on the negative than the positive is to call into question the sincerity of the assertion, which in any case states the superior position of the speaking voice (the joined souls) over the bodies, yet at the same time suggests the bodies may indeed have a certain negative power over the souls by functioning as *drosse*, bringing them down from their exalted position. The complex meaning seems to be something like this: we souls rule over our bodies, and though those bodies may seem like embarrassing unpleasant baggage to us the spirits, they are really aides to us in accomplishing our ends--yet you can surely see by our manner of saying this that you need to take it with a

grain of salt. By thus throwing itself into confusion, the line's contribution to the interpretive question seems to be irony, irony arising from an impossibly entangled knot of logical considerations.

In the last five quatrains of the poem, as in quatrains nine through twelve, metrical foregrounding functions to highlight words and phrases that summarize the themes of their passages. The double trochee *heavens influence* is the subject of quatrain 15, and in quatrain 16 *our blood labours* with its internal spondee (*blood la-*) and *Spirits, as like soules* as with its trochee-iamb-trochee structure express the tripartite theme of that passage. The 17th quatrain is regular until line 68, when attention is called to the potential waste of *Else a great Prince* by having three of the four important monosyllabic words occur in the first two feet, creating a strong trochaic-spondaic half-line that stands out in sharp relief from the surrounding neatly regular stanza. The 18th quatrain centers on the spondaic *weake men* and *loves mysteries*, while the 19th and final quatrain spondaically foregrounds the poem's final judgment on the matter: *small change*.

In the first three of these final five quatrains, the foregrounding of the thematic material seems to have the additional effect of increasing the likelihood that they will be understood seriously. The elevated content of the quatrains seems practically to force such an

interpretation, and the way the foregrounded irregularities work together with the regular lines that surround them is quite conducive to their being taken at face value. The foregrounded phrases occur in one or two lines at the beginning or end of the quatrain, and the remainder is completely regular, though never in an excessively singsong manner; since the content remains so lofty throughout the passage, the effect is one of seriousness regarding the foregrounded thematic phrase and underscored by a rational certainty expressed by just the right amount of iambic rhythmicity. In quatrain 15, the regular final three lines indicate how neatly the *soule into the soule may flow* (59). In quatrain 16, the opening two lines of metrical deviations threaten to throw the rhythm into chaos until order is majestically (yet subtly) restored by the perfectly iambic *Because such fingers need to knit / That subtile knot, which makes us man* (63-64). And in quatrain 17, the regularity of the first three lines embodies the justness of souls' having to express themselves through bodily elements *Which sense may reach and apprehend* (67), which would be unjustly prevented if the metrical and existential deviation, the imprisonment of the great Prince, is allowed to persist. Thus it seems the interpretive verdict for these stanzas is unambiguously straightforward, with irony not even a real possibility. Interestingly, those critics who do view the poem

ironically have in fact felt constrained to ignore or concede this fact. Sanders, for example, admits quatrains 16 and 17 pose an obstacle to his comprehensive ironic reading, but he dismisses this problem on the grounds that the poem's conclusion undercuts the loftiness of the sentiments expressed in these lines by returning to the very dichotomy they had so magnificently done away with as they imparted "a weight and seriousness which is new to the poem" (103).

As far as the present analysis is concerned, if the integrity of the ironic reading is to be preserved, the foregrounding in all five concluding quatrains must be viewed as merely thematic rather than interpretive. The opposite interpretive verdict, of an entirely straightforward understanding of the poem, seems prohibited by the metrical highlighting of sexual and other words and phrases obviously meant to suggest at least the possibility that the loftier material is nothing but a front to hide the real purpose of making human sexuality appear deeper than it actually is. If a choice must be made, it seems the phonological evidence indicates more support for the ironic reading. To recall the entire analysis, the serious intent of the speaker's words, as clarified by Brooks, was found to be supported by the general fact of the regular meter when it is perceived as clearheaded, rational, and unpromiscuous, as well as the particular metrical emphases

placed on such potentially serious words as *interinanimates* and the string of phrases just discussed from the final quatrains. An ironic understanding of the speaker's argument, as made coherent by Sanders, was found to be supported by the dominant four-beat cadence, when perceived as exuberantly jaunty or (perhaps) primitively emotional, as well as the many instances of metrical highlighting of suggestive words and phrases. If the interpretive decision is based on the weight of metrical evidence, it seems clear that the ironic reading is not only more frequently indicated by metrical deviations but also more performable by virtue of the possibility of giving sarcastic emphasis to those deviations that highlight serious words and phrases.

It may be more accurate to say that the sound structure of this poem challenges the performer to deliver it in a state of Donnean playful ambiguity--or, if you like, Keatsian negative capability--sounding one passage seriously and the next ironically yet with a certain paradoxical but fundamental integrity. Of the canon of Donne's poetry, William Butler Yeats has this to say:

Donne . . . was never tempted to linger, or rather pretend that we can linger, between spirit and sense. . . . there is no meeting [of spirit and sense] but only a change upon the instant, and it is by the perception of a change, like the sudden 'blacking out' of the lights of the stage, that passion creates its most violent sensation. (41)

Perhaps *The Extasie* represents the poetic embodiment of this change upon the instant. Frank Kermode labels Donne's artistry "style as the instantaneous expression of thinking" (1971, 120), which seems an apt description of the way the poem's structural vacillation reflects the poet's intellectual and emotional vacillation between spirit and sense. Perhaps we have here not a poem whose meter doesn't fit its content, but a poem in which the complexity of Donne's form matches the complexity of his thought and feeling.

End Notes

¹A stress maximum is defined as a stressed syllable of a full lexical word (noun, verb, or adjective) that occurs between two syllables bearing no lexical stress. If a syllable is adjacent to either another lexically stressed syllable or a line or syntactical boundary on either side, the syllable is not a stress maximum; it must be bounded on both sides by lexically unstressed syllables.

²Most straightforward interpreters of *The Extasie* either avoid mentioning the metrical regularity or proclaim it inappropriate for the poem's content. Gardner finds what she regards as the argumentative tone "out of keeping with the poem's subject" because she views that subject to be not persuasion but description of the ecstatic state, in which "the rational faculty is laid aside" and "in a holy stillness the intellect rests" (256). Evidently she feels the systematic, active rhythm does not convey this holy stillness. While Brooks could have argued in several different ways for the meter's appropriateness to her reading, she chooses not to address the issue. Novarr is unusual in that he views the regularity as entirely fitting for his interpretation of the speaker's pointedly cool rationality; he feels the meter demonstrates the combined soul's "certainty," that it "has no doubts as it speaks" (232).

Sanders, in his remarks about the patness indicating "someone is being guyed," is typical of ironic interpreters, who have understood the meter as suggesting a

nursery-rhyme false simplicity quite in keeping with their readings of the poem.

³Attridge offers a concise account of metrical tension on p. 79 of *The Rhythms of English Poetry*.

⁴See Redpath 221.

⁵A heavy (or strong) syllable is not to be confused with a strong position in a poetic line; the former is a phonetic and the latter a metrical concept.

⁶This historical question of the status of secondary stressing in Donne's time is discussed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER NINE: TEXTUAL VARIATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF
SOUND ANALYSIS: EXAMINING PEBWORTH'S HISTORICAL-CRITICAL
PRESENTATION OF A HYMNE TO GOD THE FATHER

In this chapter, three different versions of Donne's *A Hymn to God the Father* will be referred to repeatedly, while a fourth will be examined and its characteristics summarized. The first three are taken directly from Ted-Larry Pebworth's "The Editor, the Critic, and the Multiple Texts of Donne's 'A Hymn to God the Father'" (20-21). The fourth is from Helen Gardner's 1978 edition of *The Divine Poems*. The words that vary among the versions are underlined.

Text 1 (the Group III manuscript text):

Christo Saluatori.

Wilt thou forgiue that Sinne where I begun,
Which is my sinne, though it was donne before?
Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I run
And doe them still, though still I doe deplore?
When thou hast donne, I haue not donne, 5
For I haue more.

Wilt thou forgiue that Sinne by which I wonne
Others to Sinne, and made my sinne theyr dore?
Wilt thou forgiue that Sinn which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowd in a score? 10
When thou hast donne, thou hast not donne,
For I haue more.

I haue a Sinne of feare, that when I haue spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
Sweare by thy selfe that, at my death, thy Sunne 15
Shall shine as it shines now and heeretofore,
And hauing done that, thou hast donne,
I haue no more.

Text 2 (the Group II manuscript text):

To Christ.

Wilt thou forgive that Sinne where I begunne,
Which is my sinne, though it were donne before?
Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne
And doe them still, though still, I doe deplore?
When thou hast donne, thou hast not donne, 5
For I haue more.

Wilt thou forgive that sinne by which I have wonne
 Others to sinne, and made my sinne their doare?
 Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
 A yeere, or two, but wallowed in a score? 10
 When thou hast donne, thou hast not donne,
 For I haue more.

I haue a sinne of feare, that when I'haue spunne
 My last thred, I shall perish on the Shore;
 Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death this Sunn 15
 Shall shine as it shines nowe, and heretofore,
 And, hauing donn that, thou hast donne.
 I haue noe more.

Text 3 (the 1633 *Poems* text):

A Hymne to God the Father.

I.

Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
 Which was my sin, though it were done before?
 Wilt thou forgive that Sinne; through which I runne,
 And do run still, though still I do deplore?
 When thou hast done, thou hast not done, 5
 For, I have more.

II.

Wilt thou forgive that Sinne which I have wonne
 Others to sinne? and, made my sinne their doore?
 Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
 A yeare, or two: but wallowed in, a score? 10
 When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
 For I have more.

III.

I have a sinne of feare that when I have spunne
 My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
 But sweare by thy self, that at my death thy sonne 15
 Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore,
 And, having done that, Thou haste done,
 I feare no more.

Version 4 (from the 1978 edition of *The Divine Poems*,
edited by Helen Gardner):

A Hymn to God the Father

I

Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
Which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne,
And doe them still, though still I doe deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.

5

II

Wilt thou forgive that sinne by which I'have wonne
Others to sinne? and, made my sonne their doore?
Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
A yeare, or two: but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.

10

III

I have a sinne of feare, that when I'have spunne
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne
Shall shine as it shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I have no more.

15

In pondering how the method of sound analysis
developed thus far might be generalizable to facets of
poetic criticism beyond simple interpretation, I became
intrigued by the state of textual research of Donne's
poetry. Since it circulated only in nonauthorial
manuscripts during the poet's lifetime and was published
posthumously from sources no more (perhaps even less)
likely to have had authorial approval, Donne's texts pose
insurmountable obstacles to any editor trying to reproduce
accurately the works as they actually left the author's

hand, whether originally or after revision. Frustrations are vented in frequent articles by those who attempt to edit the canon, such as C. A. Patrides, who complains resoundingly of, among other follies, editors' "improving" texts in an effort to "methodize" the brilliantly unruly Donne, and in general proclaiming specific editorial principles but applying them only arbitrarily (365). Ted-Larry Pebworth, one of the editors of the *Donne Variorum* now being prepared, continues in the same vein, arguing convincingly against the modern editorial practice he calls "eclecticism," in which an editor, though he or she may pay lip service to the objective of attempting to reproduce the author's version of a text, in reality neglects that objective in favor of piecing together his or her own composite text, taking some portions of a literary work from one manuscript or print source and other portions from other manuscript or print sources. Using the frequently anthologized *Hymn to God the Father* as a case study, Pebworth claims that the so-called "critical texts" offered by modern editors like Helen Gardner and John Shawcross present a text of the poem which "we can be certain [Donne] never even saw" in script or print (1987; 25) (hereafter, the absence of a date in a Pebworth citation will indicate this article).

Pebworth's proposed solution, which he credits Goethe editor Hans Zeller with originating, is that instead of

constructing an inherently inaccurate critical text, editors should stop trying to satisfy readers' desires for a single text and instead present "historical-critical" editions of the works of poets like Donne for whom no authoritative text can possibly be produced (25). Such an edition would include "all distinct versions of a work [presented] as discrete units" (25), printed in their probable chronological order. For *A Hymne to God the Father*, Peabworth distills the manuscript and print evidence into three versions, which he feels respectively approximate the poem as it originally left Donne's hand, the poem as revised during Donne's lifetime by either the poet or a scribe, and the poem as constituted in its first published edition (1633), which may or may not have come from authorially reliable sources. We as readers are then left to fend for ourselves in deciding what we can learn from the various versions and which, if any, we choose to accept as authoritative.¹

Given my interest in sound analysis, I naturally recognized that one way of studying the various texts of *A Hymne to God the Father* might be to examine the versions for phonetic and metrical differences, and perhaps comparing the results to see what, if anything, was gained or lost phonologically (and, in an important sense, poetically) in the transformation. The fruit of such an endeavor would be twofold: an increased understanding of

the details of performance implications of the different versions, and an appreciation of what Pebworth calls the "development" of the poem from the standpoint of its sound patterns, in the form of a commentary similar to his own remarks regarding changes in meaning. In addition, such analysis provides a natural background from which to consider the connections between sound and meaning, in the form of educated speculation as to the poetic reasons for the changes from one text to another. The aim in such consideration will be not to discredit any text, but to seek a systematic understanding of the phonetic-metrical apparatus of each version studied. After the analysis is completed, we can examine, for what it may be worth, one of the eclectic texts Pebworth finds fault with, to see if the findings reveal any noteworthy editorial principles or tendencies with regard to phonological effects.

Pebworth's Text 1, which he identifies as the probable earliest version of *A Hymne to God the Father*, bears the title *Christo Salvatori* and comes primarily from the Group III manuscripts, which, as Gardner explains in her Textual Introduction to *The Divine Poems*, are generally earlier but compiled by persons less close to the author's inner circle than the Group II manuscripts, which are the source of Pebworth's Text 2.² He describes that second version, entitled *To Christ*, as a "grammatical and aesthetic 'tidying up'" (21) of Text 1, possibly by Donne himself,

since the Group II manuscripts are both later and nearer to the author in proximity of transmission. Finally, Text 3 is the 1633 print version, which has the commonly known title *A Hymne to God the Father* and which modern editors who do not construct eclectic texts usually choose to present. The present systematic sound analysis will consist of studying each of these texts in turn and then considering what light the findings can shed on the sound characteristics of probably the most prominent of the eclectic critical texts, that printed in Gardner's Second Edition of *The Divine Poems*, published in 1978.

Keeping in mind that it is beyond the scope of this study to be concerned with differences in meaning *per se*--most of which Peabworth treats in his article--but with such differences only insofar as they are expressed by the differences in sound patterns which are our professed subject, it will be well to begin by examining the first version's distinguishing features. In the opening stanza, these are the verb form *was* (as opposed to *were*) in line 2 and the phrase *I have*, instead of *thou hast*, in line 5. In addition to these unique variations, Text 1 shares with Text 2 the present tense *is* in line 2, the plural *those Sinnes* in line 3, and the pronoun *them* in line 4, in contrast to Text 3's *was*, *that sinne*, and *run*, but the comparison of such shared variations will be delayed until the discussion of Text 2. Beginning, then, with the unique

features of Text 1, Stanza 1, the most effective method will be to proceed line by line, considering the minute metrical and phonetic details associated with these variations, in order to get into a position from which we can comment on their sound effects.

For line two, the indicative *was* in the seventh metrical position is spoken with absolutely null stress, as is the subjunctive *were*, which occupies the position in the other versions. For many persons, one or the other version of the phrase--*was donne* or *were done*--might tend to roll off the tongue more smoothly, with slightly less duration on the already brief auxiliary, but the difference is neither predictable or large enough to affect the aesthetics or semantics of the poem.

A more significant sound difference, which also happens to constitute a significant difference in meaning, is found in Text 1's unique version of the second half of line five. Compared to the universally preferred *thou hast not done (donne)* of the other versions, *I haue not donne* is rather conspicuously clumsy since it fails to echo the first half of the line as the other form does. *I haue not donne* also lacks the other phrase's enhancement of its theological point, as the similarity of the two halves of the sentence in the later version makes for a phonological (as well as syntactic) underscoring of the close connection of the act of forgiveness (*When thou hast done*) and the

need for continual renewal of that forgiveness (*thou hast not done*). The relative lack of sound continuity between the two clauses in Text 1 (*When thou hast donne, I have not donne*) is appropriate for its meaning, however; Peabworth notes that this wording places the "responsibility [on] the speaker," responsibility that is shifted onto Christ only in the second stanza (22). Since the *I* who in this version assigns responsibility to himself by claiming to possess still more unforgiven sins is an entirely different being from the *thou* who in the first half-line is designated as having performed forgiveness of earlier sins, it is fitting that the two phrases are not identical in sound either. The supposed progress of the text (to adopt Peabworth's assumption as an hypothesis) is thus illustrated by the improvement in the sound of the line made by the echoing clause of the later versions, the adjustment of the poetic technique of matching sound to meaning in order to give expression to the more mature theology declared in those versions, and, interestingly, also in the evolution of that theology from judgment to mercy, from Old Testament to New.

In its position following *When thou hast donne, I have not donne* not only is less pleasing to the ear than *thou hast not done*, but also implies a less satisfying solution to the existential problem of sin and forgiveness, since as a human the speaker is incapable of removing or refraining from his sins. Whether this "progress" in technique and

content was Donne's "progress" or not cannot be determined; it certainly could be, but it also could be the work of a scribe, a scenario made plausible by the poet's oft-noted reputation for roughness. It is not justifiable even to speculate on such matters.

Moving on to the middle stanza, we find only a single phrase of variation, but one that has not two but three entirely different versions. The prepositional phrase in that *Sinne by which I wonne* becomes *by which I have wonne* in Text 2 and *which I have wonne* in Text 3. As in line five, considerations of both meaning and sound are pertinent to any comparison among the forms of the phrase.

Pebworth notes the simple expansion from Text 1 to Text 2 and the hard-to-pinpoint but definite change in meaning from Text 2 to Text 3; with regard to sound patterns, he also points out that Text 2's line is hypermetrical--containing eleven syllables instead of ten--while the other two versions are not. With that fact as a starting point, it is apparent that Text 1's version of the phrase makes for, from the standpoint of prosody, the smoothest line of the set; the hypermetricity of *by which I have wonne* seems unnecessary and without poetic function (and with only minor grammatical advantage), and *which I have wonne*, though technically speaking as metrical as *by which I wonne*, causes the metrical stress of the eighth position to fall on the lighter syllable *I*, which is simply not heavy

enough phonetically to carry the beat as well as does *which*. (Reuven Tsur would say *by which I wonne* possesses greater contrast between the weak and strong metrical positions than does *which I have wonne*.) Perhaps the purpose of the change is to assign emphatic stress to *I*, which can conceivably be done, but the fact remains that the phrase is prosodically purer in the Text 1 form. Again, there is no way of knowing which form Donne intended; he could even have had some reason for preferring the Text 2 version, although it may seem, to most readers, unjustifiably cumbersome.

Furthermore, in an interesting replication of the earlier findings regarding the transition from the first version to later versions of line five, the change in meaning from the first phrase to the third parallels the change in sound: *by which I wonne* is as definite in meaning as it is pure in sound, while *which I have wonne* is syntactically ambiguous (having either the same meaning as the first two forms or meaning something like "the sin I led others to commit") and accordingly is indefinite in its stress pattern and unforceful in its sound. This time, as opposed to line five, while the Text 1 version performs somewhat more smoothly, the 1633 text matches prosody to meaning just as effectively, albeit in a different manner.

Under the "progress" hypothesis, perhaps 1633 intended the

more complex theological ambiguity and expressed it with an appropriate sound pattern.

In the final stanza, Text 1 shares with Text 3 the possessive pronoun *thy* in line 15, as opposed to Text 2's demonstrative *this*. In the completion of the clause in line 16, Text 1 shares the impersonal *it* with Text 2 against Text 3's *he*, in accordance with Text 1 and 2's addressing Christ while Text 3 addresses the Father. For line 15, *thy* seems to be as universally preferred as *thou hast not done* in line five, but perhaps there is some plausible poetic reason for Text 2's containing *this* in its place, as there turned out to be a plausible reason for Text 1 to read *I have not done* instead of the preferred phrase. The problem here is that, in Peabworth's scheme at least, the less desirable *this* occurs in the textual collection chronologically in the middle position, rather than the first, so that the change cannot be accounted for by simple refinement of thought or technique. The sound effect of the variation, however, can still be connected to the difference in meaning it represents, in order to reveal any possible poetic explanation for Text 2's writing the line in this manner.

Addressing the question with this stance in mind leads to the discovery that the sound difference between the two versions (1 and 3, 2) is, like several of the other variations, a kind of metrical function of the phonetic

difference between *thy* and *this*. In the careful speech of poetic recitation, there will likely be a slight pause between *this* and *sun* to effect the separation of the words, which would not be necessary in *thy sun* since the pronoun ends in a vowel; on the other hand, however, the longer vowel in *thy* (the diphthong [aI]) makes that syllable heavier than *this*, which for many performers would even out the total duration of the two phrases. The smoothness of fit between the pronouns and *sun* also seems to be a difference too small and unpredictable to function as a phonological difference between the versions. It seems, then, that Text 2's version of the line should be understood simply as an attempt to avoid the pun occasioned by *thy sun*, since Texts 1 and 2 are addressed to Christ, making the obvious pun illogical, although Pebworth has suggested an alternative pun for *thy sun* based on Christ as *Oriens* (23). Since most modern editors use the title that addresses the poem to God the Father rather than to Christ, they apparently choose *thy* in order to restore fully the obvious pun.

The only remaining variations in Text 1 are *it* in line 16 and *haue* in 18, which, like the three instances pointed out in stanza one, are shared with the Text 2 version, to which the focus shall now shift. The variations this version shares with Text 3, over and against Text 1, have already been discussed as the distinguishing features of

Text 1. The two variations unique to this version, by which *I haue wonne* in line 7 and *this Sunn* in 15, have also already been discussed in the treatment of the corresponding phrases in Text 1. Left to be examined, then, are the variations this version shares with Text 1, the other manuscript version, against the print version, Text 3. With the exception of the two monosyllabic words in the final three lines of the poem, these are concentrated in the opening stanza.

First is the present tense *is* in the first clause of line 2, for which the printed text reads *was*. Gardner finds a significant theological difference in the speaker's assuming present responsibility for original sin; such is the apparent basis for her choosing the manuscript version as one of her many emendations of her "copy text" of 1633.

But such thematic reasoning aside, what seem to be the phonological differences between the two words as they occur in this position in the line? With either word, since both are forms of *to be*, there is a relatively weak stress occurring in a strong metrical position, followed by a strong stress in a weak position, since *my* receives emphatic stress as the focal point of the sentence. The only consideration stemming from this metrical situation is of almost negligible importance, but it does offer a phonetic reason for favoring *is* over *was*: the former, being a simple vowel-consonant syllable, is of slightly

lighter weight than the consonant-vowel-consonant form of the latter, and so intrudes less into the performer's attempt to pronounce the line according to the sense instead of the underlying metrical pattern by emphasizing *my* and de-emphasizing *is* or *was*. Thus the theological preference for *is*, if one does in fact subscribe to it, is supported by a slight phonetic preference for the same word, if one does in fact want the line to be more easily pronounced according to the sense. Apparently, when the print version was being composited, the past tense was felt to be more suitable either logically or theologically. But phonologically, the present tense works slightly more smoothly in the syllabic position.

The next variation Text 2 shares with Text 1 is the plural *those sinnes* in line 3, in contrast to Text 3's singular *that sinne*. Obviously, the difference here is, even more so than that between *is* and *was*, at least partially theological. It is also likely to seem at first glance that the sound component of the difference is appropriate in a straightforward way, in that the sound of the singular form is more nearly identical to the sound of line 1 than is the sound of the plural form, just as the meaning of the singular form is more nearly identical with original sin than is the meaning of the plural form, since both are singular terms signifying singular phenomena. Considering the subtleties of accent, however, discloses a

more complex situation: what happens when the words are spoken with normal speech intonation is that the exact repetition of the noun and its demonstrative modifier causes the modifying prepositional phrase (*through which I runne*) to receive contrastive accent, thus calling attention to the separateness of the phenomena being described, whether or not they are merely separate attributes of the same original sin or two separate theological entities. With the plural, nonrepetitive form of the phrase, it is clear both lexically and accentually that any connection between the sins of line three and the original sin of line one is existential rather than innate, since there is no momentary suggestion of identity which is instantly thrown into doubt by the accompanying prepositional phrase as there is in the case of the singular form. Thus the poetic technique employed in each case is defensible on different grounds: readers who prefer simplicity--intonational as well as lexical--will prefer the manuscript form *those sinnes*, but for those who prefer complexity and ambiguity--again intonational as well as lexical--the printed version that *sin*, though it may seem initially to be simpler since it is an exact repetition, will prove more satisfying.

The third variation shared by the manuscript texts, *doe them still* in line four, is, strictly with regard to literal meaning, virtually equivalent to 1633's *do run*

still. Gardner notes, however, that the first form of the verb phrase would be inconsistent in number with the singular noun phrase in the preceding line, and she surmises that the compiler of 1633 "corrected" it to *do run still* in order to match his "correction" of the preceding line to the singular *that sin*, an emendation with which she disagrees, as mentioned earlier, on theological grounds (110). Stylistically, however, *do run* is a lexically stronger replacement for the weak and unspecific *doe them*, and so can be seen as an "improvement," for what that observation might be worth. When we set aside all these modes of comparison, and examine the respective sound patterns of the two versions, it is immediately apparent that the effect of repeating the strong verb in the same form in such close succession (*through which I runne / And do run still*) is not only pleasing to the ear, but strengthens the point--the inevitably continual commission of sins--by the accompanying repetition of sounds. Metrically, the full lexical and therefore stressed monosyllable *run* fits the weak position in the line less well than the pronoun (i.e., less than full lexical) and therefore unstressed *them*, but the effect of this slight hitch in the rhythm seems to be to highlight the fact of continual commission, rather than to reduce aesthetic appeal by lessening contrast. *Do run still*--which is, of course, numerically consistent with either version of line

three--thus seems, with regard to its sound, both more euphonic and more metrically meaningful than the older phrase. It might therefore be said to be preferable in a poetically conventional sense, though that is to say nothing about the likelihood of its authenticity vis-à-vis the manuscript version.

The next variation shared by Texts 1 and 2 was touched on earlier, in the discussion of the *thy Sunne-this Sunn-
thy sonne* debate from line 15. In the completion of that sentence in the following line (16), Texts 1 and 2 have *it*, as opposed to Text 3's *he*. This variation is, of course, simply a function of the first two version's being addressed to Christ while the third is addressed to God the Father. The manuscript versions logically must have *it* rather than *he*, and the print version, if it is to preserve its specific reference to Christ indicated by the spelling *sonne* in line 15, must have *he* rather than *it*. But although there is thus a certain gratuitousness attached to any commentary regarding phonological effects, it is interesting to consider the different performance possibilities for the two pronouns. The difference resides in the fact that *he* begins with a consonant and *it* does not; this means that in careful poetic speech, *he* will be pronounced separately and therefore with somewhat more emphasis than *it*, since the vowel of the latter will automatically be run together with the [z] of *as* whereas

the pronunciation of the [h] will prohibit *he* from being connected in that manner. (In rapid speech, of course, the [h] of *he* is often omitted, in which case the remaining [i] sound would be connected to the [z] just as is the [I] of *it*.) *He* will thus be sounded with slightly more accent than will the completely null-stressed *it*, perhaps calling momentary attention to the pun, a reminder that will be entirely absent from the merely grammatical *it* of the other version. The rhythm and tempo of the line will be affected by the slight pause for the separate pronunciation of the [h], whereas with *it* there will be no pause whatsoever. This difference in sound quality is not great, but it is discernible, and as such is a valid poetic difference between the versions.

The last variation shared by the manuscript texts distinguishes their final lines from the final line of Text 3 metrically as well as lexically. The verb in the latter version, *I feare no more*, is not only stronger and more specific than *I haue no more*, but also remedies the difficulty presented by *haue*'s being, as Gardner points out, "an unsatisfactory word for a singer to rest on" (111). Whether or not she is alluding to the fact that Donne had this poem set to music, the metrical pattern of two iambic feet means oral performance is smoothest if all four words are, indeed, satisfactory for the performer to "rest" on--and *feare* is, indeed, more suited to carrying

such a rest, or metrical beat, than *haue*. *Feare's* greater lexical strength is the main reason for this difference; the phonetic structures of the two words follow a parallel system, but one whose impact seems negligible; *feare* with its diphthong is a slightly heavier syllable than *haue*, but only slightly, and the lexical difference would override this consideration if the two were in conflict.

Phonetically, then, *haue* could carry a metrical beat (Gardner's "rest") almost as well as *feare*, but lexically, it simply lacks the strength to do so. The sound pattern created by Text 3's *feare* thus facilitates a smoother, and perhaps easier, performance of the two-beat line than that of Text 1 and 2's *haue*. As was the case with *do run still* and *doe them still*, the later version is probably preferable from a conventional standpoint.

This concludes the discussion of the Text 2 version of *A Hymne to God the Father*. The analysis of the sound variations in Texts 1 and 2 has automatically covered all but one of the variations found in Text 3, the 1633 print version. The single variation contained by this version alone and not yet discussed because it has no counterpart in the other two versions is the addition of *But* at the beginning of line 15. Pebworth notes the most conspicuous phonological effect of the addition: it renders the line hypermetrical, with 11 syllables where ten are the norm. This seems secondary in significance, however, to the

rhythmic effect: performance testing reveals the greater ease, fluidity, and even intelligibility of speaking lines 14 and 15 with *But*--or, for that matter, any monosyllabic conjunction--inserted between them. The side-by-side presence--albeit in separate lines--of two words with nearly identical phonetic configurations (*shore* and *sweare*), both stressed because they are full lexical words and both accented because they are keys to their respective thoughts, is quite cumbersome without an unstressed syllable separating them--though Donne may have wanted it that way. The sound difference between the two versions, then, is that with *but* the verse flows considerably more naturally from the performer's lips. Although from a metrical standpoint the line as it appears in the manuscript versions is an example of initial trochaic inversion of a normal iambic line, a form permissible in both traditional and modern metrics, in this case the line-ending *shore* and the following *sweare* need, for the sake of the natural rhythmic alternation between stress and nonstress, phonetic separation as well as the logical transition provided by *But*, without which the sense of the passage is not only different but less immediately clear.³ That the line is thereby rendered hypermetrical does not seem especially significant, probably due to its containing six unstressed or only slightly stressed syllables (*by, thy, that, at, my, thy*). The phonetic and metrical

significance of Text 3's unique variation seems to lie almost completely in the separation of the two lines rather than in their syllable count.

Now that the survey of sound differences is complete, what conclusions, if any, can be drawn, or what generalizations made, from the results? In the spirit of Pebworth's proposal, the activity of comparatively evaluating the different texts--which the present discussion has, admittedly, ventured quite close to--is, from the position of an historical textual editor, pointless at best. What is worthwhile, on Pebworth's scheme, is to use the phonological analysis to shed light on the specifics of the supposed progress of the text through the three main chronological divisions supplied by the three versions. As a supplemental activity, the data generated by the analysis can also be used to support Pebworth's complaints about eclecticism with some conclusions regarding the actual choices made by a representative eclectic editor.

To begin with the latter, simpler objective, let us look for a moment at *A Hymn to God the Father* in Gardner's 1978 2nd edition of the *Divine Poems*, which seems to be the most widely used of the modern eclectic editions.⁴ Perhaps the most puzzling characteristic of her editorial choices is that she uses the 1633 heading and claims that version as her copy text (109), yet in all six variations wherein

1633 opposes both manuscripts,⁵ she opts for the older versions, seemingly on grounds of personal preference, which she explains in her Commentary to the poem (109-111).

Though her judgments are, of course, supposedly based on the 1633 variations' lack of demonstrated manuscript authority, she admits that textual editors have always struggled with the irreconcilable versions of this poem and that her main reason for avoiding the 1633 forms is that they "are weaker readings, in most cases obscuring the sense" (109). In most cases the sense she refers to seems to be her own view of the theological point being made; she apparently feels that the manuscripts represent sounder theology than does 1633, and therefore they, not 1633, must be Donne's. She does not, however, except in the case of the pronoun in line 16, offer any evidence that Donne in fact agreed with her on the theological points. Even more interesting for the present study is the fact that for all except the first of these six differences between 1633 and the manuscripts, the phonological analysis has found the sound patterns of the 1633 version to be more desirable from a conventional poetic standpoint, based on such factors as smoothness and metrical fit. Although this characteristic is not, as has been reiterated, an argument for the authorial authenticity of the later text, neither is it an argument against such authenticity, though Gardner at times seems to assume as much. In several of the

instances in which she, without authoritative support, scoffs at the "improvements" as nonauthorial scribal emendations, she proceeds to speculate concerning the poetic reasoning behind them, as though the fact that a form can be explained in commonsensical terms is evidence that it is the work of a simpler poetic mind than Donne's. It therefore seems that she has in effect chosen the more awkward or rougher forms either because they accord with her own theological opinions or because she assumes a rougher form is thereby more likely to be Donne's. Regardless of whether we accept these suppositions, the fact remains that as an eclectic and thus nonauthorial text, Gardner's version of the poem cannot be considered preferable as the basis of serious criticism or serious performing.

As Pebworth states, the goal of editorial research should be a text that is as close as possible to the authorially approved version. In a situation where such a single text of a particular work is impossible to come by, the next best thing editors can do is print all significant versions for which authorial approval is likely, to be considered by critics as discrete entities. Turning back, then, to Pebworth's proposed historical-critical edition of *A Hymn to God the Father*, what can be said about the implications of the varying sound patterns of the three versions he chooses to print?

The generally accepted view that Peabworth's Texts 1, 2, and 3 represent a chronological ordering seems well supported by the phonological findings, since in seven of the ten points of variance examined there was a phonetic, metrical, or accentual reason for preferring, from a conventional point of view, the form given in Text 3.⁵ Of course, such matters of artistic taste are subject to debate, but the arguments herein regarding such qualities as smoothness and ease of pronunciation have been made using generally accepted linguistic criteria as their basis. The supposition that *some* mind--very possibly, in the latest version, not Donne's, but someone's--sought to revise the early texts in the interests of vividness of diction and fluidity of verse is supported by the concrete evidence this study has uncovered. The analysis has revealed differences in the sound patterns of later versions of the poem, especially 1633, that demonstrate the accomplishment of just those objectives with respect to the earlier texts. 1633 may, to be sure, represent "trivialization," as Peabworth says textual editors term the practice of later scribes' having simplified difficult passages for themselves and their readers (1984; 4), but such a charge is not to be adjudicated here. What matters more is that the study has added substance to the claim that 1633 offers not only a later version of the poem, but one in which someone, possibly even Donne himself, set out

to improve, poetically as well as otherwise, the previous versions for the print edition.

End Notes

¹Pebworth is quick to point out that Herbert Grierson, grandfather of 20th century editors, did "recognize the incompatibility of the manuscript and print traditions of this particular poem," and was thereby led to print both the 1633 version and the later of the two manuscript versions, which is Pebworth's Text 2. Pebworth feels Grierson has the correct approach, but fails to carry it far enough, since he presents only one manuscript version and makes no effort to place the texts in chronological order. Aside from Grierson, though, other modern editors by and large either operate under the eclectic principle Pebworth decries or choose one 17th century version (usually 1633) to the exclusion of the others.

²The manuscript groupings are hierarchical, with Group I being the most reliably authoritative and Group V the least so, although the hierarchy is, of course, based only on inference. Group I is missing from the discussion of "A Hymne to God the Father" because that group of manuscripts was compiled (apparently) before the poem was written.

³In an earlier article, Pebworth notes the function of the addition with regard to tone and meaning, namely that with But the line is "conditional, [indicating] 'if you will only swear,'" while without it the line is imperative (1984; 6).

⁴Of the other two modern eclectic editions Pebworth mentions in his article, the older (Hayward, 1929, reprinted by Coffin in 1952) Pebworth discounts as inferior; Shawcross (1967) is similar in most respects to Gardner, but not as widely available or as frequently used by critics and educators.

⁵For easy reference, these are *is/was* (1.2), *those sinnes/that sinne* (3), *doe them still/do run still* (4), *it/he* (16), *haue/feare* (18), and *Sweare/But sweare* (15).

CHAPTER TEN: SOME CONCLUSIONS

The preceding chapter used the method of phonological performance analysis for a purpose different from that for which it was developed in the first eight chapters of this study. Before considering other possible applications and implications, it will be helpful to recall the findings in those chapters. In the opening chapter, I examined some of the phonological elements in *A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day*, in an effort to uncover the mysterious workings of sound and sense, whose connection had enraptured and intrigued me when I had heard that poem and others read aloud expressively by a college professor. This examination was intended to serve as an introduction to the method of phonological analysis, preliminary to its application to critical interpretive debates about the speaker's tone surrounding the other poems in the study. The preliminary work continued in Chapters Two and Three, which sought to ground the project theoretically and historically.

The first poem examined in the body of the project, *Elegy XIX: To his Mistress Going to Bed*, presented only a minor interpretive disagreement, to which phonological analysis contributed a similarly unambiguous result. Not many critics have agreed with William Empson that the speaker of *Elegy XIX* exhibits a "high moral tone" (99), and when the several crucial passages that attempt to sanctify the woman were subjected to performance analysis, it was

clear that their phonetic structures supported a playfully ironic, gleefully blasphemous performance rather than a somber "high moral" one. Chapter Five turned to *The Canonization*, for which there is somewhat more critical disagreement, but for which performance analysis again produced evidence largely in favor of an unequivocal interpretation of the speaker's intention, as blasphemously ironic. Chapters Six and Seven examined *Twickenham Garden* and *The Sunne Rising*, respectively, two poems that contain apparently conflicting phonological interpretive clues just as they contain conflicting interpretive clues of other types, as demonstrated by the critical confusion that attends them. In each case, phonological analysis suggested a comprehensive reading that allowed for parts of the poem to be understood ironically and parts to be understood straightforwardly, without sacrificing the logical coherence of the work as a whole.

The most critically disputed poem examined in the study, *The Extasie*, was the subject of Chapter Eight, whose analysis was deeper than the others in that it considered the metrical pattern extensively and also included the usual phonetic analysis within that framework. The interpretive result of that analysis was genuinely ambiguous, as it ended by suggesting that the propensity to "change upon the instant," as William Butler Yeats described Donne's vacillation between spirit and sense, was

a characteristic of the poet's thought directly reflected in his poetic practice, at least as exhibited in *The Extasie*. Finally, in the most recent chapter I used the phonological method to comment not on interpretive matters but on textual ones, by examining three conflicting versions of the religious poem *A Hymn to God the Father* in an effort to describe the performance variations they entailed.

My interest in applying the phonological method to the textual disputes was a direct result of Ted-Larry Pebworth's article on that subject. For other possible applications and implications I can only speculate. As for projects similar to my own in purpose and scope, it would seem possible, in principle at least, to analyze phonologically any metrical verse intended for oral performance, though there seem to be several parameters which would limit the applicability of phonological interpretation to given poems. Chief among these is the fact that many lyric poems are ostensibly intended for oral presentation yet are actually nonconversational to varying degrees. As discussed in Chapter Two, these poems--which include such sub-genres as apostrophic poetry and odes--do not offer a human speaking voice in the way that Donne's lyrics do; for this reason, "interpretation" of them is not properly as concerned with ascertaining the speaker's precise intentions, nor is the method of performance

analysis, relying so heavily as it does on interpersonal intonational communication, likely to yield such useful data. An ode, for example, is meant to be a celebratory public oration. As such, it is certainly oral and invariably does express emotion, but generally only in the relatively impersonal and indirect manner of a public oration. It does not pretend to be a specimen of the more private, interpersonal communication of direct emotion which is the manner of Donne's lyrics.

Among lyric poems cast as odes, one candidate for interpretive phonological analysis from Donne's time period which has been suggested to me is Andrew Marvell's *An Horatian Ode*, composed in 1650 to commemorate Oliver Cromwell's triumphant return to England after crushing the Catholic rebellion in Ireland; there is a prominent interpretive debate concerning its sincerity, which could presumably be addressed by performance analysis in much the same manner as I have addressed the question of Donne's speakers' sincerity.¹ Certainly this would work to some extent, as the poem is lyrical and metrical and can be performed in either a serious or an ironic manner. It seems, however, that with its strained "poetic" syntax and often elevated diction in the place of the free-flowing syntax and natural diction of Donne's works, the occasions for intonational precision in the expression of the speaker's attitude would be few and forced. It therefore

seems that while the phonological method would be applicable to such a debate, it likely would not yield as much evidence as most of the poems studied herein have yielded. Within the period of the Renaissance and early 17th century, Shakespeare's works--possibly the sonnets and especially the plays, with their colloquial yet skillfully metered style-- would seem to be much stronger candidates for performance analysis.

For poetic works lacking the type of fundamental disagreement that interpretive performance analysis can adjudicate, the activity of analyzing systematically the sound patterns purely for the sake of uncovering occasions of "semantic-phonological cohesiveness" (Traugott 77) would seem to be a worthwhile enterprise for scholars concerned with understanding the inner workings of poetic art. The contribution of this study to such an enterprise would seemingly be the method of discovering such semantic-phonological connections by performance testing, which, as I hope I have demonstrated, I believe to be essential when the poems in question are presented in the guise of real human utterance.

There are perhaps deeper implications for phonological analysis in other areas of literary criticism beyond simple interpretation or sound-of-sense commentary. It would seem an expected result of critics' adopting the practice of open-minded phonological analysis designed to confirm or

refute their interpretive hypotheses--as opposed to the usual type of sound analysis which simply notes sound devices that support a given interpretation--that sometimes this activity would amount to "deconstructing" a text phonologically. The sound patterns in a lyric poem might be found to disrupt any possible interpretation that might be given to it, as, for example, by contradicting the words in a manner that could not be accounted for by simply positing irony on the part of the poem's speaker. It seems a skilled deconstructionist could, rather than dismissing such a poem as artistically inferior, analyze it for the meaning of such conflict between sound and sense. It would be interesting to see if phonological analysis could explode the purported coherence of works of literature the same way deconstructionist readings of other aspects of the works can. It would also be interesting to see what theoretical questions might result from such activity. The arguments for the equal importance of the oral dimension of lyric poetry that were offered in Chapter Two of this study might take on an entirely new look if texts were subjected to deconstruction based on that oral dimension.

As something less than a professional linguist, I would not presume that my work might have relevance in that discipline, nor that I could even imagine what course it might take if it did. In a general sense, it seems reasonable to expect that the application of all branches

of linguistics to literary criticism will continue to grow as a field of inquiry; in recent correspondence, Elizabeth Traugott informs me that the subject is currently more appreciated in the United Kingdom than in this country, suggesting that there is much work to be done on both sides of the Atlantic in this sub-discipline. Perhaps the present study can serve as one example of what the science of linguistics has to offer for the purposes of poetic criticism.

In a more specific vein, it seems that of the many assumptions I have made and impressions I have used (always, of course, making clear the unconfirmed nature thereof), at least some might one day be investigated by linguists researching intonation theory. Perhaps one day in the next century a scholar may be able to undertake an interpretive phonological analysis and base it on empirically established linguistic facts about intonation and meaning, or phonetics and intonation, or any of the other suppositions I have made during the course of this study. This would not be because of anything I have done with them (since I have merely made use of them), but because they represent important features of intonational communication which seemingly will be studied in due time. As I explained in Chapter Two, there is much work to be done in the area of partially contrastive intonational systems, which in a general sense includes most all the

linguistic intuitions I have operated from. I certainly hope progress will be made in studying those topics, with or without regard to literary criticism.

Turning to the question of possible implications for teaching, I have more to say, and somewhat more hope that my suggestions might prove feasible and valuable . At the very least, I would hope that my study might encourage more literature professors to read poetry aloud in the classroom. For whatever reasons, this seems in our day and age to be largely a lost art. I hope my study has given substance to my belief that a metrical lyric poem is not completely actualized as a work of art until it is vocalized expressively. Perhaps this is one reason the average modern student has so little appreciation for poetry; maybe it's not that the content is uninteresting, but rather that the vehicle is dead, or seems so. The simple act of reading aloud expressively, which results in natural attention to the phonological elements I have identified or to others, would seem valuable as a means of making poetry come alive for modern student audiences. The object of this study might even be a good place to start. It has been my experience that Donne is often omitted from survey courses, but it also seems that, using this study as a starting point, students could easily be led to appreciate his love poetry. College students identify with romantic passion, and the complicated background material

could be kept to a minimum if the emphasis of the lesson were to examine the sounds and the feelings they evoked, or perhaps even to take issue with some of my arguments and wrestle with them from a phonological perspective.

There would seem to be many other applications for the classroom beyond the professor's simply reading aloud to the students. Though it might be time-consuming, students could perform parts of poems themselves, perhaps as part of a memorization assignment, another teaching technique that seems old-fashioned but that I believe is valuable in stimulating appreciation. If the assignment included reciting the poem expressively, preparation would require attention to the sense rather than merely rote memorization. For those of us who have ever been surprised or disappointed at students' lack of attention to the basic syntax of a lyric poem, it seems expressive oral recitation would force them to make sense of the text in order to know where to pause and where to make other basic intonational adjustments. Being forced to grasp a poem in this manner would perhaps be intellectually rewarding for students also.

For poets who have recorded their own work, or who have supervised recordings of their work by other readers--Yeats and Robert Frost come to my mind as major figures whose recordings of their work are frequently used in the classroom--it might be interesting to have a class

activity whereby the students got involved in the process of analyzing the authorial performances for the expressive use of phonological elements and syntactic patterns. One way to do this might be for them to develop their own expressive performances or phonological analyses--perhaps in group discussions--and then listen to the recording to see if and in what respects the two differed. Interesting theoretical questions for discussion or criticism also arise from the idea of authorial performances; for example, is it possible for an author to misinterpret, in a phonological sense, his or her own work?

There are several ways in which I am interested in following up this study with further research. One is to look into the field of acting theory, perhaps especially regarding the performance of Shakespeare's plays, which are, as mentioned above, not only contemporary to but also stylistically similar to Donne's work; I would like to research the discipline simply to see what it had to offer regarding performance possibilities for various types of poetic lines. On a level of more intensive research, I plan to do some serious reading of the work of Julia Kristeva, whose applications of psychoanalytic theory to linguistics seem possibly connected to my own approach. Her argument for the involvement of the bodily drives in spoken language--which was previously assumed by many to be a purely symbolic activity--seems potentially relevant to

my assumptions regarding the emotion-conveying capability of various phonological elements and the intersubjective communicative value of partially contrastive intonational systems. Finally, since the presence of a speaker implies the presence of listeners, I would like to study the field of reader-response criticism to see what insights it might have to offer regarding future applications of my method to poetic criticism.

End Notes

¹Two eminent critics who have engaged in spirited debate regarding the tone of Marvell's poem are Cleanth Brooks and Douglas Bush.

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VITA

A lifelong resident of Jackson, Mississippi, Sara Witsell Anderson majored in philosophy and history as an undergraduate and received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Rhodes College in 1979. During post-baccalaureate work at Belhaven College, she had the good fortune to study British literature under Dr. William Durrett, and in his classes discovered a love of poetry which led her to undertake graduate study. At Mississippi College, she encountered another outstanding educator, Dr. Craig Turner, whose spirited teaching led to her earning the Master of Arts degree in 1991. At Louisiana State University, the pattern of intellectual attachment to a single demanding and inspiring professor once again repeated itself, as she completed the present work under the dedicated direction and with the supportive friendship of Dr. Anna Nardo.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: Linguistics and Poetry: Phonological Performance
Analysis as Key to Interpretation in Donne's Lyrics

Approved:

Anna K. Nardo

Major Professor and Chairman

William Lockie

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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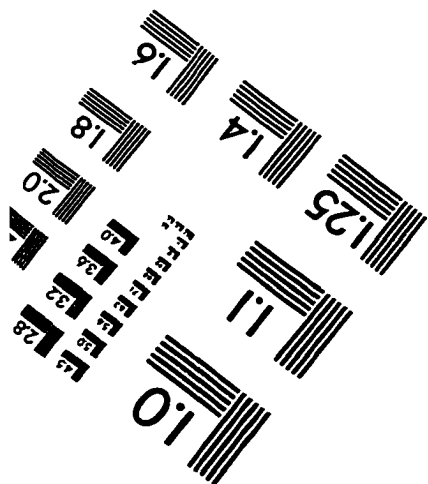
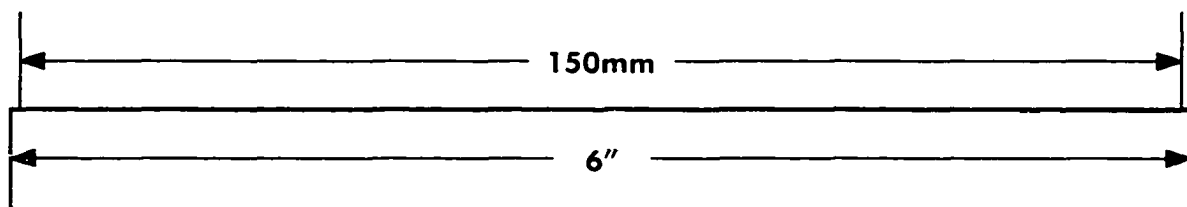
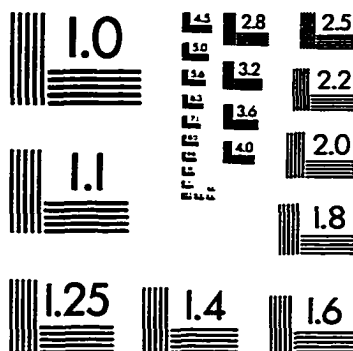
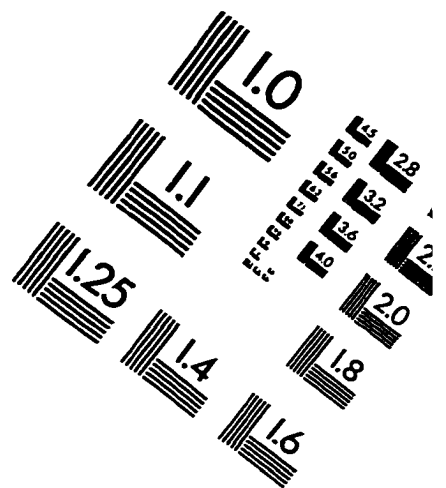
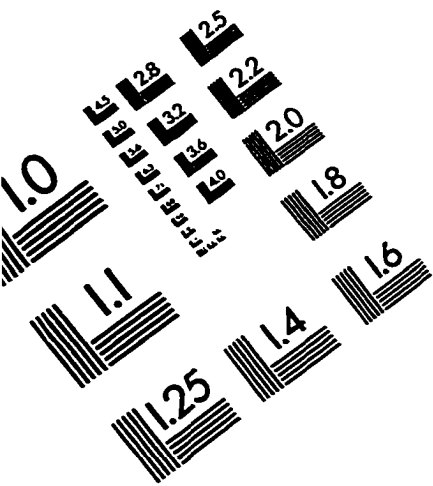
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Date of Examination:

Oct. 29, 1997

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